

THE
GREAT CHAM
[DR. JOHNSON]

'That Great Cham of Literature, Sa
SMOLLETT TO WILKINS

THE GREAT CHAM

[DR. JOHNSON]

BEING AN ABRIDGMENT, PARTLY
REARRANGED, OF JAMES BOSWELL'S
'LIFE OF SAMUEL JOHNSON'
AND 'THE TOUR TO THE
HEBRIDES'

Edited by
JOHN GRAVES

With ten illustrations by
E. H. SHEPARD

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TO
A. L. I.
WHO KINDLED
A SPARK

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PREFACE

THIS book is meant for those who have not time to read the whole of Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, but who wish, none the less, for a life-like portrait.

The story is told by James Boswell, a Scot of good family, who, on his occasional visits to London, spent as much time as possible in Johnson's company.

Johnson's fame rests as much on his dictionary as on his skill as a talker, while the chief event in his friendship with Boswell was their bold journey to the Hebrides in 1773. All three subjects have, therefore, been dealt with at some length. It was found impossible to keep the story moving without cutting out some of Johnson's best remarks. These, a few of his letters, and references to Garrick and Goldsmith, have been brought together near the end. Some may be surprised that there is no chapter on Reynolds, but they will find him well represented in conversation.

When there is so much that is good from which to choose, it is inevitable that many favourite passages will be missing from these pages. If readers hasten away to search for rejected plums in the unabridged text, this book will have more than fulfilled its purpose.

JOHN GRAVES

Harlech, 1933

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him at the cathedral perched upon his father's shoulders, listening and gaping at the much celebrated preacher. Mr. Hammond asked Mr. Johnson how he could possibly think of bringing such an infant to church, and in the midst of so great a crowd. He answered, because it was impossible to keep him at home, for, young as he was, he believed he had caught the public spirit and zeal for Sacheverel, and would have stayed for ever in the church, satisfied with beholding him.

One day, when the servant who used to be sent to school to conduct him home had not come in time, he set out by himself, though he was then so near-sighted, that he was obliged to stoop down on his hands and knees to take a view of the kennel¹ before he ventured to step over it. His school-mistress, afraid that he might miss his way, or fall into the kennel, or be run over by a cart, followed him at some distance. He happened to turn about and perceive her. Feeling her careful attention as an insult to his manliness, he ran back to her in a rage, and beat her, as well as his strength would permit.

When he was a child in petticoats, and had learnt to read, Mrs. Johnson one morning put the common prayer-book into his hands, pointed to the collect for the day, and said, 'Sam, you must get this by heart.' She went upstairs, leaving him to study it: but by the time she had reached the second floor, she heard him following her. 'What's the matter?' said she. 'I can say it,' he replied; and repeated it distinctly, though he could not have read it more than twice.

Young Johnson had the misfortune to be much afflicted with the scrofula, or king's evil, which disfigured a countenance naturally well formed, and

¹ Gutter.



'He was actually touched by Queen Anne'

hurt his visual nerves so much, that he did not see at all with one of his eyes, though its appearance was little different from that of the other. It has been said, that he contracted this grievous malady from his nurse. His mother, yielding to the superstitious notion, which, it is wonderful to think, prevailed so long in this country, as to the virtue of the regal touch, carried him to Lōndon, where he was actually touched by Queen Anne. Johnson used to talk of this very frankly. Being asked if he could remember Queen Anne, 'He had (he said) a confused, but somehow a sort of solemn recollection of a lady in diamonds, and a long black hood.' This touch, however, was without any effect.

He was first taught to read English by Dame Oliver, a widow, who kept a school for young children in Lichfield. When he was going to Oxford, she came to take leave of him, brought him, in the simplicity of her kindness, a present of gingerbread, and said, he was the best scholar she ever had. He delighted in mentioning this early compliment: adding, with a smile, that 'this was as high a proof of his merit as he could conceive.'

He began to learn Latin with Mr. Hawkins, usher, or under-master of Lichfield school, 'a man (said he) very skilful in his little way.' With him he continued two years, and then rose to be under the care of Mr. Hunter, the head-master, who, according to his account, 'was very severe, and wrong-headedly severe. He used (said he) to beat us unmercifully; and he did not distinguish between ignorance and negligence, for he would beat a boy equally for not knowing a thing, as for neglecting to know it. He would ask a boy a question, and if he did not answer it, he would beat him, without considering whether he had an opportunity of knowing how to answer it. For instance, he would

call up a boy and ask him Latin for a candle-stick, which the boy could not expect to be asked. Now, Sir, if a boy could answer every question, there would be no need of a master to teach him.'

Mr. Langton¹ one day asked him how he had acquired so accurate a knowledge of Latin, in which, I believe, he was exceeded by no man of his time; he said, 'My master whipped me very well. Without that, Sir, I should have done nothing.' He told Mr. Langton, that while Hunter was flogging his boys unmercifully, he used to say, 'And I do this to save you from the gallows.'

From his earliest years his superiority was perceived and acknowledged. He was from the beginning a king of men. His school-fellow, Mr. Hector, assured me that he never knew him corrected at school, but for talking and diverting other boys from their business. He seemed to learn by intuition; for though indolence and procrastination were inherent in his constitution, whenever he made an exertion, he did more than any one else.

His favourites used to receive very liberal assistance from him; and such was the submission and deference with which he was treated, such the desire to obtain his regard, that three of the boys, of whom Mr Hector was sometimes one, used to come in the morning as his humble attendants, and carry him to school. One in the middle stooped, while he sat upon his back, and one on each side supported him; and thus he was borne triumphant.

He discovered a great ambition to excel, which roused him to counteract his indolence. He was uncommonly inquisitive; and his memory was so tenacious, that he

¹ Bennet Langton was a close friend of Johnson, whom he succeeded as Professor of Ancient Literature at the Royal Academy (1788).

never forgot anything that he either heard or read. Mr. Hector remembers having recited to him eighteen verses, which, after a little pause, he repeated *verbatim*, varying only one epithet, by which he improved the line.

He never joined with the other boys in their ordinary diversions: his only amusement was in winter, when he took a pleasure in being drawn upon the ice by a boy bare-footed, who pulled him along by a garter fixed round him; no very easy operation, as his size was remarkably large. His defective sight, indeed, prevented him from enjoying the common sports; and he once pleasantly remarked to me, 'how wonderfully well he had contrived to be idle without them.'

After having resided for some time at the house of his uncle, Cornelius Ford, Johnson was, at the age of fifteen, removed to the school of Stourbridge, in Worcestershire, of which Mr. Wentworth was then master.

'Mr. Wentworth (he told me) was a very able man, but an idle man, and to me very severe; but I cannot blame him much. I was then a big boy; he saw I did not reverence him; and that he should get no honour by me. I had brought enough with me, to carry me through, and all I should get at his school would be ascribed to my own labour, or to my former master. Yet he taught me a great deal.'

OXFORD

THE two years which he spent at home, after his return from Stourbridge, he passed in what he thought idleness, and was scolded by his father for his want of steady application. He had no settled plan of life, nor looked forward at all, but merely lived from day to day. Yet he read a great deal in a desultory manner, without any scheme of study, as chance threw books in his way, and inclination directed him through them. He used to mention one curious instance of his casual reading, when but a boy. Having imagined that his brother had hid some apples behind a large folio upon an upper shelf in his father's shop, he climbed up to search for them. There were no apples; but the large folio proved to be Petrarch, whom he had seen mentioned in some preface, as one of the restorers of learning. His curiosity having been thus excited, he sat down with avidity, and read a great part of the book.

'Sunday (said he) was a heavy day to me when I was a boy. My mother confined me on that day, and made me read *The Whole Duty of Man*, from a great part of which I could derive no instruction. When, for instance, I had read the chapter on theft, which from my infancy I had been taught was wrong, I was no more convinced that theft was wrong than before; so there was no accession of knowledge.

'I fell into an inattention to religion, or an indifference about it, in my ninth year. The Church at Lichfield, in which we had a seat, wanted reparation, so I was to go and find a seat in other churches; and having bad eyes, and being awkward about this, I used to go and

read in the fields on Sunday. This habit continued till my fourteenth year; and still I find a great reluctance to go to church. I then became a sort of lax *talker* against religion, for I did not much *think* against it; and this lasted till I went to Oxford, where it would not be *suffered*. When at Oxford, I took up Law's *Serious Call to a Holy Life*, expecting to find it a dull book (as such books generally are), and perhaps to laugh at it. But I found Law quite an overmatch for me, and this was the first occasion of my thinking in earnest of religion, after I became capable of rational enquiry'

That a man in Mr. Michael Johnson's circumstances should think of sending his son to the expensive University of Oxford, at his own charge, seems very improbable. The subject was too delicate to question Johnson upon. But I have been assured by Dr. Taylor¹ that the scheme never would have taken place had not a gentleman of Shropshire, one of his school-fellows, spontaneously undertaken to support him at Oxford, in the character of his companion; though, in fact, he never received any assistance whatever from that gentleman.

He, however, went to Oxford, and was entered a Commoner of Pembroke College on the 31st of October, 1728, being then in his nineteenth year.

The Reverend Dr. Adams told me he was present, and gave me some account of what passed on the night of Johnson's arrival at Oxford. On that evening, his father, who had anxiously accompanied him, found means to have him introduced to Mr. Jorden, who was to be his tutor. His father seemed very full of the merits of his son, and told the company he was a good scholar, and a poet, and wrote Latin verses.

¹ John Taylor had been with Johnson at Lichfield School.

His figure and manner appeared strange to them, but he behaved modestly, and sat silent, till upon something which occurred in the course of conversation, he suddenly struck in and quoted Macrobius, and thus he gave the first impression of that more extensive reading in which he had indulged himself.

His tutor, Mr Jorden, fellow of Pembroke, was not, it seems, a man of such abilities as we should conceive requisite for the instructor of Samuel Johnson, who gave me the following account of him : 'He was a very worthy man, but a heavy man, and I did not profit much by his instructions. Indeed, I did not attend him much. The first day after I came to college I waited upon him, and then stayed away four. On the sixth, Mr. Jorden asked me why I had not attended. I answered I had been sliding in Christ Church meadow. And this I said with as much *nonchalance* as I am now talking to you. I had no notion that I was wrong or irreverent to my tutor.'

BOSWELL: 'That, Sir, was great fortitude of mind.'

JOHNSON: 'No, Sir; stark insensibility.'

He had a love and respect for Jorden, not for his literature, but for his worth. 'Whenever (said he) a young man becomes Jorden's pupil, he becomes his son.'

The 'morbid melancholy,' which was lurking in his constitution, and to which we may ascribe those particularities, and that aversion to regular life, which, at a very early period, marked his character, gathered such strength in his twentieth year, as to afflict him in a dreadful manner. While he was at Lichfield in the College vacation of the year 1729, he felt himself overwhelmed with a horrible hypochondria, with perpetual irritation, fretfulness, and impatience, and with a dejection, gloom, and despair, which made existence

misery. From this dismal malady he never afterwards was perfectly relieved, and all his labours, and all his enjoyments, were but temporary interruptions of its baleful influence.

Johnson, upon the first violent attack of this disorder, strove to overcome it by forcible exertions. He frequently walked to Birmingham and back again, and tried many other expedients, but all in vain. His expression concerning it to me was 'I did not then know how to manage it'

It is a common effect of low spirits or melancholy, to make those who are afflicted with it imagine that they are actually suffering those evils which happen to be most strongly presented to their minds. To Johnson, whose supreme enjoyment was the exercise of his reason, the disturbance or obscuration of that faculty was the evil most to be dreaded. [Insanity, therefore, was the object of his most dismal apprehension; and he fancied himself seized by it, or approaching to it, at the very time when he was giving proofs of a more than ordinary soundness and vigour of judgment.

He told me what he read *solidly* at Oxford was Greek. He had a peculiar facility in seizing at once what was valuable in any book, without submitting to the labour of perusing it from beginning to end. He had, from the irritability of his constitution, at all times, an impatience and hurry when he either read or wrote. A certain apprehension, arising from novelty, made him write his first exercise at College twice over; but he never took that trouble with any other composition; and we shall see that his most excellent works were struck off at heat, with rapid exertion.

His apartment in Pembroke College was that upon the second floor, over the gateway. Dr. Adams told

me that he 'was caressed and loved by all about him, was a gay and frolicsome fellow, and passed there the happiest part of his life.' But this is a striking proof of the fallacy of appearances, and how little any of us know of the real internal state even of those whom we see most frequently; for the truth is, that he was then depressed by poverty, and irritated by disease. When I mentioned to him this account as given me by Dr. Adams, he said, 'Ah, Sir, I was mad and violent. It was bitterness which they mistook for frolic. I was miserably poor, and I thought to fight my way by my literature and my wit; so I disregarded all power and all authority.'

The Bishop of Dromore¹ observes in a letter to me, 'I have heard from some of his contemporaries that he was generally seen lounging at the College gate, with a circle of young students round him, whom he was entertaining with wit, and keeping from their studies, if not spiriting them up to rebellion against the College discipline, which in his maturer years he so much extolled.'

I do not find that he formed any close intimacies with his fellow-collegians. But he contracted a love and regard for Pembroke College, which he retained to the last. He took a pleasure in boasting of the many eminent men who had been educated at Pembroke. In this list are found the names of Mr. Hawkins the Poetry Professor, Mr. Shenstone, Sir William Blackstone and others. Being himself a poet, Johnson was peculiarly happy in mentioning how many of the sons of Pembroke were poets; adding, with a smile of sportive triumph, 'Sir, we are a nest of singing birds.'

He was not, however, blind to what he thought the defects of his own College.

¹ See footnote on p. 179.

Taylor had obtained his father's consent to be entered of Pembroke, that he might be with his school-fellow Johnson, with whom, though some years older than himself, he was very intimate. This would have been a great comfort to Johnson. But he fairly told Taylor that he could not, in conscience, suffer him to enter where he knew he could not have an able tutor. He then made inquiry all round the University, and having found that Mr. Bateman, of Christ Church, was the tutor of highest reputation, Taylor was entered of that College. Mr. Bateman's lectures were so excellent, that Johnson used to come and get them at second-hand from Taylor, till his poverty being so extreme that his shoes were worn out, and his feet appeared through them, he saw that this humiliating circumstance was perceived by the Christ Church men, and he came no more. He was too proud to accept of money, and somebody having set a pair of new shoes at his door, he threw them away with indignation.

The *res angusta domi* prevented him from having the advantage of a complete academical education. The friend to whom he had trusted for support had deceived him. His debts in College, though not great, were increasing; and his scanty remittances from Lichfield, which had all along been made with great difficulty, could be supplied no longer, his father having fallen into a state of insolvency. Compelled, therefore, by irresistible necessity, he left the College in autumn, 1731, without a degree, having been a member of it little more than three years.

FROM LICHFIELD TO LONDON

AND now (I had almost said *poor*) Samuel Johnson returned to his native city, destitute, and not knowing how he should gain even a decent livelihood. His father's misfortunes in trade rendered him unable to support his son; and for some time there appeared no means by which he could maintain himself. In the December of this year his father died.

The state of poverty in which he died, appears from a note in one of Johnson's little diaries.

'1732, *Julii* 15. *Undecim aureos deposui*. I laid by eleven guineas on this day, when I received twenty pounds, being all that I have reason to hope for out of my father's effects, previous to the death of my mother, an event which I pray God may be very remote. I now therefore see that I must make my own fortune.'

In the forlorn state of his circumstances, he accepted of an offer to be employed as usher in the school of Market-Bosworth, in Leicestershire, to which it appears, from one of his little fragments of a diary, that he went on foot, on the 16th of July. '*Julii* 16. *Bosvortiam pedes petii*.'

This employment was very irksome to him in every respect, and he complained 'that the poet had described the dull sameness of his existence in these words, '*Vitam continet una dies*' (one day contains the whole of my life); that it was unvaried as the note of the cuckoo; and that he did not know whether it was more disagreeable for him to teach, or the boys to learn, the grammar rules !

After suffering for a few months, he relinquished a

FROM LICHFIELD TO LONDON

situation which all his life afterwards he recollected with the strongest aversion, and even a degree of horror.

Being now again totally unoccupied, he was invited by Mr. Hector to pass some time with him at Birmingham. He made some valuable acquaintances there, amongst whom were Mr. Porter, a mercer, and Mr. Warren, with whom Mr. Hector lodged and boarded. Mr. Warren was the first established bookseller in Birmingham, and was very attentive to Johnson, whom he soon found could be of much service to him in his trade, by his knowledge of literature.

Johnson continued to live as Mr. Hector's guest for about six months, and then hired lodgings in another part of the town, finding himself as well situated at Birmingham as he supposed he could be anywhere, while he had no settled plan of life, and very scanty means of subsistence.

Johnson having mentioned that he had read at Pembroke College a *Voyage to Abyssinia*, by Lobo, a Portuguese Jesuit, and that he thought an abridgment and translation of it from the French into English might be a useful and profitable publication, Mr. Warren and Mr. Hector joined in urging him to undertake it. He accordingly agreed.

A part of the work being very soon done, one Osborn, who was Mr. Warren's printer, was set to work with what was ready, and Johnson engaged to supply the press with copy as it should be wanted; but his constitutional indolence soon prevailed, and the work was at a stand. Mr. Hector went to Johnson, and represented to him, that the printer could have no other employment till this undertaking was finished, and that the poor man and his family were suffering. Johnson upon this exerted the powers of his mind, though his body was relaxed. He lay in bed with the book,

which was a quarto, before him, and dictated while Hector wrote. Mr. Hector carried the sheets to the press, and corrected almost all the proof sheets, very few of which were ever seen by Johnson.

In this manner the book was completed, and was published in 1735, with LONDON upon the title-page, though it was in reality printed in Birmingham, a device too common with provincial publishers. For this work he had from Mr. Warren only the sum of five guineas.

Johnson had, from his earliest youth, been sensible to the influence of female charms. When at Stourbridge he was much enamoured of Olivia Lloyd, a young quaker, to whom he wrote a copy of verses.

Johnson became the fervent admirer of Mrs. Porter, after her first husband's death. Miss Porter told me, that when he was first introduced to her mother, his appearance was very forbidding; he was then lean and lank, so that his immense structure of bones was hideously striking to the eye, and the scars of the scrofula were deeply visible. He also wore his hair, which was straight and stiff, and separated behind: and he often had, seemingly, convulsive starts and odd gesticulations, which tended to excite at once surprise and ridicule. Mrs. Porter was so engaged by his conversation that she overlooked all these external disadvantages, and said to her daughter, "This is the most sensible man that I ever saw in my life."

Though Mrs. Porter was double the age of Johnson, and her person and manner were by no means pleasing to others, she must have had a superiority of understanding and talents, as she certainly inspired him with a more than ordinary passion, and she having signified her willingness to accept of his hand, he went to Lichfield to ask his mother's consent to the marriage, which

he could not but be conscious was a very imprudent scheme, both on account of their disparity of years, and her want of fortune. But Mrs Johnson knew too well the ardour of her son's temper, and was too tender a parent to oppose his inclinations.

I know not for what reason the marriage ceremony was not performed at Birmingham; but a resolution was taken that it should be at Derby, for which place the bride and bridegroom set out on horseback, I suppose in very good humour. I have had from my illustrious friend the following curious account of their journey to church upon the nuptial morn: 'Sir, she had read the old romances, and had got into her head the fantastical notion that a woman of spirit should use her lover like a dog. So, Sir, at first she told me that I rode too fast, and she could not keep up with me; and, when I rode a little slower, she passed me, and complained that I lagged behind. I was not to be made the slave of caprice; and I resolved to begin as I meant to end. I therefore pushed on briskly, till I was fairly out of her sight. The road lay between two hedges, so I was sure she could not miss it; and I contrived that she should soon come up with me. When she did, I observed her to be in tears.'

This, it must be allowed, was a singular beginning of connubial felicity; but there is no doubt that Johnson proved a most affectionate and indulgent husband to the last moment of Mrs. Johnson's life.

He now set up a private academy, for which purpose he hired a large house, well situated near his native city. In *The Gentleman's Magazine* for 1736, there is the following advertisement: 'At Edial, near Lichfield, in Staffordshire, young gentlemen are boarded and taught the Latin and Greek languages, by SAMUEL JOHNSON.'

But the only pupils that were put under his care were the celebrated David Garrick and his brother George, and a Mr. Offely, a young gentleman of good fortune who died early.

Johnson was not more satisfied with his situation as the master of an academy, than with that of the usher of a school; we need not wonder, therefore, that he did not keep his academy above a year and a half. From Mr Garrick's account he did not appear to have been profoundly revered by his pupils. His oddities of manner, and uncouth gesticulations, could not but be the subject of merriment to them.

Johnson now thought of trying his fortune in London, the great field of genius and exertion, where talents of every kind have the fullest scope, and the highest encouragement. It is a memorable circumstance that his pupil David Garrick went thither at the same time, with intention to complete his education, and follow the profession of the law, from which he was soon diverted by his decided preference for the stage.

Johnson had a little money when he came to town, and he knew how he could live in the cheapest manner. His first lodging was at the house of Mr. Norris, a staymaker, in Exeter-street, adjoining Catharine-street, in the Strand.

'I dined (said he) very well for eightpence, with very good company, at the Pine Apple in New-street, just by. Several of them had travelled. They expected to meet every day; but did not know one another's names. It used to cost the rest a shilling, for they drank wine; but I had a cut of meat for sixpence, and bread for a penny, and gave the waiter a penny, so that I was quite well served, nay, better than the rest; for they gave the waiter nothing.'

FROM LICHFIELD TO LONDON

An Irish painter, whom he knew at Birmingham, assured Johnson 'that thirty pounds a year was enough to enable a man to live there without being contemptible. He allowed ten pounds for clothes and linen. He said a man might live in a garret at eighteenpence a week, few people would inquire where he lodged; and if they did, it was easy to say, "Sir, I am to be found at such a place." By spending threepence in a coffee-house, he might be for some hours every day in very good company, he might dine for sixpence, breakfast on bread and milk for a penny, and do without supper. On *clean-shirt-day* he went abroad and paid visits.'

Amidst this cold obscurity, there was one brilliant circumstance to cheer him; he was well acquainted with Mr. Henry Hervey, one of the branches of the noble family of that name, who had been quartered at Lichfield as an officer of the army, and had at this time a house in London, where Johnson was frequently entertained, and had an opportunity of meeting genteel company. Not long before his death, he mentioned this and described this early friend, 'Harry Hervey,' thus: 'He was a vicious man, but very kind to me. If you call a dog HERVEY, I shall love him.'

He had now written only three acts of his *Irene*, and he retired for some time to lodgings at Greenwich, where he proceeded in it somewhat further, and used to compose, walking in the Park.

In the course of the summer he returned to Lichfield, where he had left Mrs. Johnson, and there he at last finished his tragedy, which was not executed with his rapidity of composition upon other occasions, but was slowly and painfully elaborated.

He now removed to London with Mrs. Johnson.

His lodgings were for some time in Woodstock-street,

near Hanover-square, and afterwards in Castle-street, near Cavendish-square.

His tragedy being by this time, as he thought, completely finished and fit for the stage, he was very desirous that it should be brought forward. Mr Peter Garrick told me, that Johnson and he went together to the Fountain tavern, and read it over, and that he afterwards solicited Mr Fleetwood, the patentee of Drury-lane theatre, to have it acted at his house, but Mr. Fleetwood would not accept it, probably because it was not patronised by some man of high rank; and it was not acted till 1749, when his friend David Garrick was manager of that theatre.

But in this benevolent purpose Garrick met with no small difficulty from the temper of Johnson, which could not brook that a drama which he had been obliged to keep ^{near} more than the nine years of *Horace*, should be revised and altered at the pleasure of an actor. Yet Garrick knew well, that without some alterations it would not be fit for the stage.

A violent dispute having arisen between them, Garrick applied to the Reverend Dr. Taylor to interpose. Johnson was at first very obstinate 'Sir, (said he) the fellow wants me to make Mahomet run mad, that he may have an opportunity of tossing his hands and kicking his heels.' He was, however, at last, with difficulty, prevailed on to comply with Garrick's wishes so as to allow of some changes; but still there were not enough.

Dr. Adams was present the first night, and gave me the following account:

'Before the curtain drew up, there were catcalls whistling, which alarmed Johnson's friends. The Prologue, which was written by himself in a manly strain, soothed the audience, and the play went off

tolerably, till it came to the conclusion, when Mrs. Pritchard, the heroine of the piece, was to be strangled upon the stage, and was to speak two lines with the bow-string round her neck. The audience cried out "*Murder ! Murder !*" She several times attempted to speak, but in vain. At last she was obliged to go off the stage alive.' This passage was afterwards struck out; and she was carried off to be put to death behind the scenes, as the play now has it.

On occasion of his play being brought upon the stage Johnson had a fancy that as a dramatic author his dress should be more gay than what he ordinarily wore; he therefore appeared behind the scenes, and even in one of the side boxes, in a scarlet waistcoat, with rich gold lace, and a gold-laced hat. He observed to Mr. Langton, 'that when in that dress he could not treat people with the same ease as when in his usual plain clothes.'

The Gentleman's Magazine, begun and carried on by Mr. Edward Cave, under the name of SYLVANUS URBAN, had attracted the notice and esteem of Johnson, in an eminent degree, before he came to London as an adventurer in literature. He was now enlisted by Mr. Cave as a regular coadjutor in his magazine, by which he probably obtained a tolerable livelihood.

Johnson's *London*¹ was published in May, 1738. It came out on the same morning with Pope's satire, entitled '1738.' Everybody was delighted with it; and there being no name to it, the first buzz of the literary circles was, 'Here is an unknown poet, greater even than Pope.'

Pope, who then filled the poetical throne without a rival, must have been particularly struck by the sudden

¹ *London, a Poem, in Imitation of the Third Satire of Juvenal.*

appearance of such a poet; and to his credit let it be remembered, that his feelings and conduct on the occasion were candid and liberal. He requested Mr. Richardson, son of the painter, to endeavour to find out who this new author was. Mr. Richardson, after some inquiry, having informed him that he had discovered only that his name was Johnson, and that he was some obscure man, Pope said, 'He will soon be *déterré*.'

Though thus elevated into fame, and conscious of uncommon powers, Johnson could not expect to produce many such works as his *London*, and he felt the hardships of writing for bread; he was, therefore, willing to resume the office of a schoolmaster, so as to have a sure, though moderate, income for his life, and an offer being made to him of the mastership of a school, provided he could obtain the degree of Master of Arts, Dr. Adams was applied to, by a common friend, to know whether that could be granted him as a favour from the University of Oxford. But though he had made such a figure in the literary world, it was then thought too great a favour to be asked.

Pope, without any knowledge of him but from his *London*, recommended him to Earl Gower, who endeavoured to procure for him a degree from Dublin, by a letter to a friend of Dean Swift. It was, perhaps, no small disappointment to Johnson that this respectable application had not the desired effect.

About this time he made one other effort to emancipate himself from the drudgery of authorship. He applied to Dr. Adams, to consult Dr. Smalbroke of the Commons, whether a person might be permitted to practise as an advocate there, without a doctor's degree in Civil Law. 'I am (said he) a total stranger to these studies; but whatever is a profession, and maintains

numbers, must be within the reach of common abilities, and some degree of industry.' But here, also, the want of a degree was an insurmountable bar.

In 1742 he wrote the 'Proposals for Printing Bibliotheca Harleiana, or a Catalogue of the Library of the Earl of Oxford.' He was employed in this business by Mr. Thomas Osborne the bookseller, who purchased the library for £13,000. It has been confidently related, with many embellishments, that Johnson one day knocked Osborne down in his shop with a folio, and put his foot upon his neck. The simple truth I had from Johnson himself. 'Sir, he was impertinent to me, and I beat him. But it was not in his shop: it was in my own chamber.'

In 1744 he produced one work, fully sufficient to maintain the high reputation which he had acquired. This was *The Life of Richard Savage*; a man of whom it is difficult to speak impartially, without wondering that he was for some time the intimate companion of Johnson; for his character was marked by profligacy, insolence, and ingratitude: yet, as he undoubtedly had a warm and vigorous, though unregulated mind, had seen life in all its varieties, and been much in the company of the statesmen and wits of his time, he could communicate to Johnson an abundant supply of such materials as his philosophical curiosity most eagerly desired; and as Savage's misfortunes and misconduct had reduced him to the lowest state of wretchedness as a writer for bread, his visits to St. John's-gate naturally brought Johnson and him together.

It is melancholy to reflect, that Johnson and Savage were sometimes in such extreme indigence, that they could not pay for a lodging; so that they have wandered together whole nights in the streets. One night in particular, when Savage and he walked round St.

James's-square for want of a lodging, they were not at all depressed by their situation; but, in high spirits and brimful of patriotism, traversed the square for several hours, inveighed against the minister,¹ and 'resolved they would *stand by their country*.'

I am afraid, however, that by associating with Savage, who was habituated to the dissipation and licentiousness of the town, Johnson, though his good principles remained steady, did not entirely preserve that conduct, for which, in days of greater simplicity, he was remarked by his friend Mr. Hector, but was imperceptibly led into some indulgences which occasioned much distress to his virtuous mind.

Sir Joshua Reynolds told me, that upon his return from Italy he met with Johnson's *Life of Savage* in Devonshire, knowing nothing of its author, and began to read it while he was standing with his arm leaning against a chimney-piece. It seized his attention so strongly, that, not being able to lay down the book till he had finished it, when he attempted to move, he found his arm totally benumbed.

The rapidity with which this work was composed, is a wonderful circumstance. Johnson has been heard to say, 'I wrote forty-eight of the printed octavo pages of the *Life of Savage* at a sitting; but then I sat up all night.'

It is somewhat curious, that his literary career appears to have been almost totally suspended in the years 1745 and 1746, those years which were marked by a civil war in Great Britain, when a rash attempt was made to restore the House of Stuart to the throne. That he had a tenderness for that unfortunate House, is well known; and some may fancifully imagine, that a sympathetic anxiety impeded the exertion of his

¹ Possibly Walpole.

intellectual powers: but I am inclined to think, that he was, during this time, sketching the outlines of his great philological work.

4

AT WORK ON THE 'DICTIONARY'

THE year 1747 is distinguished as the epoch, when Johnson's arduous and important work, his *DICTIONARY OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE*, was announced to the world, by the publication of its Plan or *Prospectus*.

The *Plan* was addressed to Philip Dormer, Earl of Chesterfield, then one of his Majesty's Principal Secretaries of State; a nobleman who was very ambitious of literary distinction, and who, upon being informed of the design, had expressed himself in terms very favourable to its success.

Johnson told me, 'Sir, the way in which the *Plan* of my *Dictionary* came to be inscribed to Lord Chesterfield, was this: I had neglected to write it by the time appointed. Dodsley¹ suggested a desire to have it addressed to Lord Chesterfield. I laid hold of this as a pretext for delay, that it might be better done, and let Dodsley have his desire. I said to my friend, Dr. Bathurst, "Now if any good comes of my addressing to Lord Chesterfield, it will be ascribed to deep policy, when, in fact, it was only a casual excuse for laziness."'

Dr. Adams found him one day busy at his *Dictionary*.

¹ Robert Dodsley, one of the booksellers who contracted with Johnson for the *Dictionary*.

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ADAMS: 'This is a great work, Sir. How can you do this in three years?'

JOHNSON: 'Sir, I have no doubt that I can do it in three years.'

ADAMS: 'But the French Academy, which consists of forty members, took forty years to compile their Dictionary.'

JOHNSON: 'Sir, thus it is. This is the proportion. Let me see; forty times forty is sixteen hundred. As three to sixteen hundred, so is the proportion of an Englishman to a Frenchman.'

For the mechanical part he employed, as he told me, six amanuenses, and let it be remembered by the natives of North Britain, to whom he is supposed to have been so hostile, that five of them were of that country. To all these painful labourers, Johnson showed a never-ceasing kindness, so far as they stood in need of it.

While the *Dictionary* was going forward, Johnson lived part of the time in Holborn, part in Gough-square, Fleet-street; and he had an upper room fitted up like a counting-house for the purpose, in which he gave to the copyists their several tasks. The words, partly taken from other dictionaries, and partly supplied by himself, having been first written down with spaces left between them, he delivered in writing their etymologies, definitions, and various significations. The authorities were copied from the books themselves, in which he had marked the passages with a black-lead pencil, the traces of which could easily be effaced.

The necessary expense of preparing a work of such magnitude for the press, must have been a considerable deduction from the price¹ stipulated to be paid for the copyright. I understand that nothing was allowed by the booksellers on that account; and I remember his

¹ £1,575.

telling me, that a large portion of it having by mistake been written upon both sides of the paper, so as to be inconvenient for the compositor, it cost him twenty pounds to have it transcribed upon one side only.

In 1750 he came forth in the character for which he was eminently qualified, a majestic teacher of moral and religious wisdom. The vehicle which he chose was that of a periodical paper, which he knew had been, upon former occasions, employed with great success. Johnson was, I think, not very happy in the choice of his title, *The Rambler*, which certainly is not suited to a series of grave and moral discourses, and which the Italians have literally, but ludicrously translated by *Il Vagabondo*.

He gave Sir Joshua Reynolds the following account of its getting this name: 'What *must* be done, Sir, *will* be done. When I was to begin publishing that paper, I was at a loss how to name it. I sat down at night upon my bedside, and resolved that I would not go to sleep till I had fixed its title. *The Rambler* seemed the best that occurred, and I took it.'

The first paper of *The Rambler* was published on Tuesday the 20th of March, 1750; and its author was enabled to continue it, without interruption, every Tuesday and Friday, till Saturday the 17th of March, 1752, on which day it closed.

This is a strong confirmation of the truth of a remark of his, that 'a man may write at any time, if he will set himself doggedly to it'; for, notwithstanding his constitutional indolence, his depression of spirits, and his labour in carrying on his *Dictionary*, he answered the stated calls of the press twice a week from the stores of his mind during all that time.

Posterity will be astonished when they are told, upon

the authority of Johnson himself, that many of these discourses, which we should suppose had been laboured with all the slow attention of literary leisure, were written in haste as the moment pressed, without even being read over by him before they were printed. It can be accounted for only in this way; that by reading and meditation, and a very close inspection of life, he had accumulated a great fund of miscellaneous knowledge, which, by a peculiar promptitude of mind, was ever ready at his call, and which he had constantly accustomed himself to clothe in the most apt and energetic expression.

Sir Joshua Reynolds once asked him by what means he had attained his extraordinary accuracy and flow of language. He told him, that he had early laid it down as a fixed rule to do his best on every occasion, and in every company, to impart whatever he knew in the most forcible language he could put it in, and that by constant practice, and never suffering any careless expressions to escape him, or attempting to deliver his thoughts without arranging them in the clearest manner, it became habitual to him.

That there should be a suspension of his literary labours during a part of the year 1752, will not seem strange, when it is considered that soon after closing his *Rambler*, he suffered a loss which, there can be no doubt, affected him with the deepest distress. For on the 17th of March his wife died. That his love for his wife was of the most ardent kind, and, during the long period of fifty years, was unimpaired by the lapse of time, is evident from various passages in the series of his *Prayers and Meditations*.

Her wedding-ring, when she became his wife, was, after her death, preserved by him, as long as he lived, with an affectionate care, in a little round wooden box,

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in the inside of which he pasted a slip of paper, thus inscribed by him in fair characters, as follows:

*'Eheu !
Eliz. Johnson,
Nupta Jul. 9° 1736,
Mortua, eheu !
Mart. 17° 1752.'*

I have been told by Mrs. Desmoulins, who, before her marriage, lived for some time with Mrs. Johnson at Hampstead, that she indulged herself in country air and nice living, at an unsuitable expense, while her husband was drudging in the smoke of London, and that she by no means treated him with that complacency which is the most engaging quality in a wife. But all this is perfectly compatible with his fondness for her, especially when it is remembered that he had a high opinion of her understanding, and that the impressions which her beauty, real or imaginary, had originally made upon his fancy, being continued by habit, had not been effaced, though she herself was doubtless much altered for the worse.

The dreadful shock of separation took place in the night; and he immediately dispatched a letter to his friend, the Reverend Dr. Taylor, which, as Taylor told me, expressed grief in the strongest manner he had ever read. The letter was brought to Dr. Taylor, at his house in the Cloisters, Westminster, about three in the morning; and as it signified an earnest desire to see him, he got up, and went to Johnson as soon as he was dressed, and found him in tears and in extreme agitation. After being a little while together, Johnson requested him to join with him in prayer.

He deposited the remains of Mrs. Johnson in the church of Bromley, in Kent.

The circle of his friends at this time was extensive and various, far beyond what has generally been imagined. When Johnson lived in Castle-street, Cavendish-square, he used frequently to visit two ladies, who lived opposite to him, Miss Cotterells, daughters of Admiral Cotterell. Reynolds used also to visit there, and thus they met. Mr Reynolds, as I have observed above, had, from the first reading of his *Life of Savage* conceived a very high admiration of Johnson's powers of writing. His conversation no less delighted him; and he cultivated his acquaintance with the laudable zeal of one who was ambitious of general improvement.

Sir Joshua, indeed, was lucky enough at their very first meeting to make a remark, which was so much above the common-place style of conversation, that Johnson at once perceived that Reynolds had the habit of thinking for himself. The ladies were regretting the death of a friend, to whom they owed great obligations, upon which Reynolds observed, 'You have, however, the comfort of being relieved from a burthen of gratitude.' They were shocked a little at this alleviating suggestion, as too selfish; but Johnson defended it in his clear and forcible manner, and was much pleased with the *mind*, the fair view of human nature, which it exhibited, like some of the reflections of Rochefoucauld. The consequence was, that he went home with Reynolds, and supped with him.

When they were one evening together at the Miss Cotterells', the then Duchess of Argyle and another lady of high rank came in. Johnson, thinking that the Miss Cotterells were too much engrossed by them, and that he and his friend were neglected, as low company of whom they were somewhat ashamed, grew angry; and resolving to shock their supposed pride, by making

their great visitors imagine that his friend and he were low indeed, he addressed himself in a loud tone to Mr. Reynolds, saying, 'How much do you think you and I could get in a week, if we were to *work as hard* as we could?'—as if they had been common mechanics.

His acquaintance with Bennet Langton, Esq., of Langton, in Lincolnshire, another much valued friend, commenced soon after the conclusion of his *Rambler*; which that gentleman, then a youth, had read with so much admiration, that he came to London chiefly with the view of endeavouring to be introduced to its author. By a fortunate chance he happened to take lodgings in a house where Mr. Levett¹ frequently visited; and having mentioned his wish to his landlady, she introduced him to Mr. Levett, who readily obtained Johnson's permission to bring Mr. Langton to him; as, indeed, Johnson, during the whole course of his life, had no shyness, real or affected, but was easy of access to all who were properly recommended, and even wished to see numbers at his *levée*, as his morning circle of company might, with strict propriety, be called.

Mr. Langton was exceedingly surprised when the sage first appeared. He had not received the smallest intimation of his figure, dress, or manner. From perusing his writings, he fancied he should see a decent, well-drest, in short, a remarkably decorous philosopher. Instead of which, down from his bed-chamber, about noon, came, as newly risen, a huge uncouth figure, with a little dark wig which scarcely covered his head, and his clothes hanging loose about him. But his conversation was so rich, so animated, and so forcible, and his religious and political notions so congenial with those in which Langton had been educated, that he

¹ A poor friend of Johnson.

conceived for him that veneration and attachment which he ever preserved.

Johnson was not the less ready to love Mr. Langton, for his being of a very ancient family, for I have heard him say, with pleasure, 'Langton, Sir, has a grant of free warren from Henry the Second; and Cardinal Stephen Langton, in King John's reign, was of this family.'

Mr Langton afterwards went to pursue his studies at Trinity College, Oxford, where he formed an acquaintance with his fellow student, Mr. Topham Beauclerk. Johnson, soon after this acquaintance began, passed a considerable time at Oxford. He at first thought it strange that Langton should associate so much with one who had the character of being loose, both in his principles and practice, but, by degrees, he himself was fascinated.

Mr. Beauclerk's being of the St. Albans family, and having, in some particulars, a resemblance to Charles the Second, contributed, in Johnson's imagination, to throw lustre upon his other qualities, and, in a short time, the moral, pious Johnson, and the gay, dissipated Beauclerk, were companions. 'What a coalition ! (said Garrick, when he heard of this) I shall have my old friend to bail out of the Round-house.'

One night when Beauclerk and Langton had supped at a tavern in London, and sat till about three in the morning, it came into their heads to go and knock up Johnson, and see if they could prevail on him to join them in a ramble. They rapped violently at the door of his chambers in the Temple, till at last he appeared in his shirt, with his little black wig on the top of his head, instead of a nightcap, and a poker in his hand, imagining, probably, that some ruffians were coming to attack him. When he discovered who they were,

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and was told their errand, he smiled, and with great good humour agreed to their proposal: 'What, is it you, you dogs! I'll have a frisk with you.'

He was soon drest, and they sallied forth together into Covent-Garden, where the greengrocers and fruiterers were beginning to arrange their hampers, just come in from the country. Johnson made some attempts to help them; but the honest gardeners stared so at his figure and manner, and odd interference, that he soon saw his services were not relished.

They then repaired to one of the neighbouring taverns, and made a bowl of that liquor called *Bishop*, which Johnson had always liked; while in joyous contempt of sleep, from which he had been roused, he repeated the festive lines:

'Short, O short then be thy reign,
And give us to the world again!'

They did not stay long, but walked down to the Thames, took a boat, and rowed to Billingsgate. Beauchamp and Johnson were so well pleased with their amusement, that they resolved to persevere in dissipation for the rest of the day: but Langton deserted them, to breakfast with some young ladies. Johnson scolded him for 'leaving his social friends, to go and sit with a set of wretched *un-idea'd* girls.'

The *Dictionary*, we may believe, afforded Johnson full occupation. As it approached to its conclusion, he probably worked with redoubled vigour, as seamen increase their exertion and alacrity when they have a near prospect of their haven.

Lord Chesterfield, to whom Johnson had paid the high compliment of addressing to his Lordship the *Plan* of his *Dictionary*, had behaved to him in such a manner as to excite his contempt and indignation. The world

has been for many years amused with a story confidently told, and as confidently repeated with additional circumstances, that a sudden disgust was taken by Johnson upon occasion of his having been one day kept long in waiting in his Lordship's antechamber, for which the reason assigned was, that he had company with him, and that at last, when the door opened, out walked Colley Cibber;¹ and that Johnson was so violently provoked when he found for whom he had been so long excluded, that he went away in a passion, and never would return.

Johnson himself assured me, that there was not the least foundation for it. He told me, that there never was any particular incident which produced a quarrel between Lord Chesterfield and him, but that his Lordship's continued neglect was the reason why he resolved to have no connection with him.

When the *Dictionary* was upon the eve of publication, Lord Chesterfield, who, it is said, had flattered himself with expectations that Johnson would dedicate the work to him, attempted, in a courtly manner, to soothe, and insinuate himself with the sage, conscious, as it should seem, of the cold indifference with which he had treated its learned author; and further attempted to conciliate him, by writing two papers in *The World*, in recommendation of the work; and it must be confessed, that they contain some studied compliments, so finely turned, that if there had been no previous offence, it is probable that Johnson would have been highly delighted. Praise, in general, was pleasing to him; but by praise from a man of rank and elegant accomplishments, he was peculiarly gratified.

This courtly device failed of its effect. Johnson, who

¹ An actor, poet, and dramatist, of whom Johnson held a low opinion.

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thought that 'all was false and hollow,' despised the honeyed words, and was even indignant that Lord Chesterfield should, for a moment, imagine that he could be the dupe of such an artifice. His expression to me concerning Lord Chesterfield, upon this occasion, was, 'Sir, after making great professions, he had, for many years, taken no notice of me; but when my *Dictionary* was coming out, he fell a scribbling in *The World* about it. Upon which, I wrote him a letter expressed in civil terms, but such as might shew him that I did not mind what he said or wrote, and that I had done with him.'

TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE
THE EARL OF CHESTERFIELD.

February 7, 1755.

'MY LORD,—I have been lately informed, by the proprietor of *The World*, that two papers, in which my *Dictionary* is recommended to the public, were written by your Lordship. To be so distinguished, is an honour, which, being very little accustomed to favours from the great, I know not well how to receive, or in what terms to acknowledge.

'When, upon some slight encouragement, I first visited your Lordship, I was overpowered, like the rest of mankind, by the enchantment of your address; and could not forbear to wish that I might boast myself *Le vainqueur du vainqueur de la terre*;—that I might obtain that regard for which I saw the world contending; but I found my attendance so little encouraged, that neither pride nor modesty would suffer me to continue it.

'When I had once addressed your Lordship in public, I had exhausted all the art of pleasing which a retired and uncourtly scholar can possess. I had

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done all that I could; and no man is well pleased to have his all neglected, be it ever so little.

'Seven years, my Lord, have now past, since I waited in your outward rooms, or was repulsed from your door; during which I have been pushing on my work through difficulties, of which it is useless to complain, and have brought it, at last, to the verge of publication, without one act of assistance, one word of encouragement, or one smile of favour. Such treatment I did not expect, for I never had a patron before.

'The shepherd in Virgil grew at last acquainted with Love, and found him a native of the rocks.

'Is not a patron, my Lord, one who looks with unconcern on a man struggling for life in the water, and, when he has reached ground, encumbers him with help? The notice which you have been pleased to take of my labours, had it been early, had been kind; but it has been delayed till I am indifferent, and cannot enjoy it; till I am solitary, and cannot impart it; till I am known, and do not want it. I hope it is no very cynical asperity not to confess obligations where no benefit has been received, or to be unwilling that the public should consider me as owing that to a patron, which Providence has enabled me to do for myself.

'Having carried on my work thus far with so little obligation to any favourer of learning, I shall not be disappointed though I should conclude it, if less be possible, with less; for I have been long awakened from that dream of hope, in which I once boasted myself with so much exultation, my Lord, your Lordship's most humble, most obedient servant,

'SAM. JOHNSON.'

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There is a curious minute circumstance which struck me, in comparing the various editions of Johnson's *Imitations of Juvenal*. In the tenth Satire, one of the couplets upon the vanity of wishes even for literary distinction stood thus:

'Yet think what ills the scholar's life assail,
Pride, envy, want, the *garret*, and the jail.'

But after experiencing the uneasiness which Lord Chesterfield's fallacious patronage made him feel, he dismissed the word *garret* from the sad group, and in all the subsequent editions the line stands:

'Pride, envy, want, the *Patron*, and the jail.'

That Lord Chesterfield must have been mortified by the lofty contempt, and polite, yet keen satire with which Johnson exhibited him to himself in this letter, it is impossible to doubt. He, however, with that glossy duplicity which was his constant study, affected to be quite unconcerned.

Johnson having now explicitly avowed his opinion of Lord Chesterfield, did not refrain from expressing himself concerning that nobleman with pointed freedom:

'This man (said he) I thought had been a Lord among wits; but, I find, he is only a wit among Lords !'

THE 'DICTIONARY' PUBLISHED

JOHNSON this year (1754) found an interval of leisure to make an excursion to Oxford, for the purpose of consulting the libraries there. Of his conversation while at Oxford at this time, Mr. Warton communicated to me the following:

'He waited on the master of Pembroke, Dr. Radcliffe, who received him very coldly. Johnson at least expected, that the master would order a copy of his *Dictionary*, now near publication: but the master did not choose to talk on the subject, never asked Johnson to dine, nor even to visit him, while he stayed at Oxford. After he had left the lodgings, Johnson said to me, "*There lives a man, who lives by the revenues of literature, and will not move a finger to support it. If I come to live at Oxford, I shall take up my abode at Trinity.*"

'About this time there had been an execution of two or three criminals at Oxford on a Monday. Soon afterwards, one day at dinner, I was saying that Mr. Swinton, the chaplain of the gaol, and also a frequent preacher before the University, preached the condemnation-sermon on repentance, before the convicts, on the preceding day, Sunday; and that in the close he told his audience, that he should give them the remainder of what he had to say on the subject, the next Lord's Day. Upon which, one of our company, a Doctor of Divinity, and a plain matter-of-fact man, by way of offering an apology for Mr. Swinton, gravely remarked, that he had probably preached the same sermon before the University: "Yes, Sir, (said Johnson) but the University were not to be hanged the next morning."'

THE 'DICTIONARY' PUBLISHED

The degree of Master of Arts, which could not be obtained for him at an earlier period of his life, was now considered as an honour of considerable importance, in order to grace the title-page of his *Dictionary*; and his character in the literary world being by this time deservedly high, his friends thought that, if proper exertions were made, the University of Oxford would pay him the compliment.

In 1755 we behold him to great advantage; his degree of Master of Arts conferred upon him, his *Dictionary* published.

Mr. Andrew Millar, bookseller in the Strand, took the principal charge of conducting the publication of Johnson's *Dictionary*; and as the patience of the proprietors was repeatedly tried and almost exhausted, by their expecting that the work would be completed within the time which Johnson had sanguinely supposed, the learned author was often goaded to dispatch, more especially as he had received all the copy-money, by different drafts, a considerable time before he had finished his task. When the messenger who carried the last sheet to Millar returned, Johnson asked him, 'Well, what did he say?'—'Sir, (answered the messenger) he said, "Thank God, I have done with him."' 'I am glad (replied Johnson, with a smile) that he thanks God for any thing.'

The *Dictionary*, with a *Grammar and History of the English Language*, being now at length published, in two volumes folio, the world contemplated with wonder so stupendous a work achieved by one man, while other countries had thought such undertakings fit only for whole academies. Vast as his powers were, I cannot but think that his imagination deceived him, when he supposed that by constant application he might have performed the task in three years.

THE 'DICTIONARY' PUBLISHED

The Preface furnishes an eminent instance of a double talent, of which Johnson was fully conscious. Sir Joshua Reynolds heard him say, 'There are two things which I am confident I can do very well: one is an introduction to any literary work, stating what it is to contain, and how it should be executed in the most perfect manner; the other is a conclusion, showing from various causes why the execution has not been equal to what the author promised to himself and to the public.'

The etymologies, though they exhibit learning and judgment, are not, I think, entitled to the first praise amongst the various parts of this immense work. The definitions have always appeared to me such astonishing proofs of acuteness of intellect and precision of language, as indicate a genius of the highest rank. They who will make the experiment of trying how they can define a few words of whatever nature, will soon be satisfied of the unquestionable justice of this observation.

A few of his definitions must be admitted to be erroneous. A lady once asked him how he came to define *Pastern* the *knee* of a horse: instead of making an elaborate defence, as she expected, he at once answered, 'Ignorance, Madam, pure ignorance.'

His introducing his own opinions, and even prejudices, under general definitions of words, while at the same time the original meaning of the words is not explained, as his *Tory*, *Whig*, *Pension*, *Oats*, *Excise*, and a few more, cannot be fully defended.¹

¹ *TORY*, a cant term, derived, I suppose, from an Irish word, signifying a savage. One who adheres to the ancient constitution of the state and the apostolic hierarchy of the Church of England: opposed to a *Whig*.

WHIG, the name of a faction.

PENSION, an allowance made to anyone without an equivalent.

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He mentioned a still stronger instance of the predominance of his private feelings in the composition of this work, than any now to be found in it. 'You know, Sir, Lord Gower forsook the old Jacobite interest. When I came to the word *Renegado*, after telling that it meant 'one who deserts to the enemy, a revolter,' I added, '*Sometimes we say a GOWER.*' Thus it went to the press, but the printer had more wit than I, and struck it out.'

Let it, however, be remembered, that this indulgence does not display itself only in sarcasm towards others, but sometimes in playful allusion to the notions commonly entertained of his own laborious task. Thus: '*Grub-street*, the name of a street in London, much inhabited by writers of small histories, *dictionaries*, and temporary poems; whence any mean production is called *Grub-street*.'—'*Lexicographer*, a writer of dictionaries, a harmless drudge.'

At the time when he was concluding his very eloquent Preface, Johnson's mind appears to have been in such a state of depression, that we cannot contemplate without wonder the vigorous and splendid

In England it is generally understood to mean pay given to a state hireling for treason to his country.

PENSIONER, a slave of state hired by a stipend to obay his master.

OATS, a grain which in England is generally given to horses, but in Scotland supports the people.

EXCISE, a hateful tax levied upon commodities, and adjudged not by the common judges of property, but wretches hired by those to whom Excise is paid. The Commissioners of Excise being offended by this severe reflection, consulted Mr. Murray, then Attorney-General, to know whether redress could be legally obtained. I am informed, by very good authority, that the import of the opinion which he gave was, that the passage might be considered as actionable; but that it would be more prudent in the board not to prosecute. Johnson never made the smallest alteration in this passage.

thoughts which so highly distinguish that performance. 'I (says he) may surely be contented without the praise of perfection, which if I could obtain in this gloom of solitude, what would it avail me ? I have protracted my work till most of those whom I wished to please have sunk into the grave; and success and miscarriage are empty sounds I therefore dismiss it with frigid tranquillity, having little to fear or hope from censure or from praise.'

It is a sad saying, that 'most of those whom he wished to please had sunk into the grave'; and his case at forty-five was singularly unhappy, unless the circle of his friends was very narrow. I have often thought, that as longevity is generally desired, and I believe, generally expected, it would be wise to be continually adding to the number of our friends, that the loss of some may be supplied by others. Friendship, 'the wine of life,' should, like a well-stocked cellar, be thus continually renewed; and it is consolatory to think, that although we can seldom add what will equal the generous *first-growths* of our youth, yet friendship becomes insensibly old in much less time than is commonly imagined, and not many years are required to make it very mellow and pleasant.

At a subsequent period of his life, Johnson said to Sir Joshua Reynolds, 'If a man does not make new acquaintance as he advances through life, he will soon find himself left alone. A man, Sir, should keep his friendship in *constant repair*.'

ON JOHNSON'S DICTIONARY

Talk of war with a Briton, he'll boldly advance,
That one English soldier will beat ten of France,
Would we alter the boast from the sword to the pen,
Our odds are still greater, still greater our men:
In the deep mines of science though Frenchmen may
toil,

THE 'DICTIONARY' PUBLISHED

Can their strength be compar'd to Locke, Newton, and
Boyle ?

Let them rally their heroes, send forth all their pow'rs,
Their verse-men and prose-men, then match them with
ours !

First Shakspeare and Milton, like gods in the fight,
Have put their whole drama and epic to flight;
In satires, epistles, and odes, would they cope,
Their numbers retreat before Dryden and Pope;
And Johnson, well arm'd like a hero of yore,
Has beat forty French, and will beat forty more !

DAVID GARRICK.

6

JOURNALIST AND PENSIONER

IN 1756 Johnson found that the great fame of his *Dictionary* had not set him above the necessity of 'making provision for the day that was passing over him.' No royal or noble patron extended a munificent hand to give independence to the man who had conferred stability on the language of his country.

He had spent, during the progress of the work, the money for which he had contracted to write his *Dictionary*. We have seen that the reward of his labour was only fifteen hundred and seventy-five pounds; and when the expense of amanuenses, and paper and other articles, are deducted, his clear profit was very inconsiderable. I once said to him, 'I am sorry, Sir, you did not get more for your *Dictionary*.' His answer was, 'I am sorry, too. But it was very well. The booksellers are generous, liberal-minded men.' He, upon all occasions, did ample justice to their character in this respect. He considered them as the patrons

of literature; and, indeed, although they have eventually been considerable gainers by his *Dictionary*, it is to them that we owe its having been undertaken and carried through at the risk of great expense.

His works this year were, an abstract or epitome, in octavo, of his folio *Dictionary*, and a few essays in a monthly publication, entitled *The Universal Visitor*. He engaged also to superintend and contribute largely to another monthly publication, entitled *The Literary Magazine, or Universal Review*, the first number of which came out in May this year. He continued to write in it, with intermissions, till the fifteenth number.

His defence of tea against Mr. Jonas Hanway's violent attack upon that elegant and popular beverage, shews how very well a man of genius can write upon the slightest subject, when he writes, as the Italians say, *con amore*: I suppose no person ever enjoyed with more relish the infusion of that fragrant leaf than Johnson. The quantities which he drank of it at all hours were so great, that his nerves must have been uncommonly strong, not to have been extremely relaxed by such an intemperate use of it. He assured me that he never felt the least inconvenience from it.

The generosity with which he pleads the cause of Admiral Byng is highly to the honour of his heart and spirit. Though *Voltaire* affects to be witty upon the fate of that unfortunate officer, observing that he was shot '*pour encourager les autres*,' the nation has long been satisfied that his life was sacrificed to the political fervour of the times. In the vault belonging to the Torrington family, in the church of Southill, in Bedfordshire, there is the following Epitaph upon his monument, which I have transcribed:

JOURNALIST AND PENSIONER

' TO THE PERPETUAL DISGRACE
OF PUBLIC JUSTICE,
THE HONOURABLE JOHN BYNG, ESQ.
ADMIRAL OF THE BLUE,
FELL A MARTYR TO POLITICAL
PERSECUTION,
MARCH 14, IN THE YEAR, 1757;
WHEN BRAVERY AND LOYALTY
WERE INSUFFICIENT SECURITIES
FOR THE LIFE AND HONOUR OF
A NAVAL OFFICER.'

He this year resumed his scheme of giving an edition of *Shakspeare* with notes. He issued proposals of considerable length, but his indolence prevented him from pursuing it with that diligence which alone can collect these scattered facts that genius, however acute, penetrating, and luminous, cannot discover by its own force. It is remarkable, that at this time his fancied activity was for the moment so vigorous, that he promised his work should be published before Christmas, 1757. Yet nine years elapsed before it saw the light.

His throes in bringing it forth had been severe and remittent; and at last we may almost conclude that the operation was performed by the knife of Churchill, whose upbraiding satire, I dare say, made Johnson's friends urge him to dispatch.

He for subscribers baits his hook,
And takes your cash; but where's the book ?
No matter where; wise fear, you know,
Forbids the robbing of a foe;
But what, to serve our private ends,
Forbids the cheating of our friends ?

On the fifteenth of April, 1758, he began a new periodical paper, entitled *The Idler*, which came out every Saturday in a weekly newspaper, called *The Universal Chronicle*, or *Weekly Gazette*. These essays were continued till April 5, 1760. Of one hundred and three, their total number, twelve were contributed by his friends.

Many of these excellent essays were written as hastily as an ordinary letter. Mr. Langton remembers Johnson, when on a visit to Oxford, asking him one evening how long it was till the post went out; and on being told about half an hour, he exclaimed, 'then we shall do very well.' He upon this instantly sat down and finished an *Idler*, which it was necessary should be in London the next day. Mr. Langton having signified a wish to read it, 'Sir, (said he) you shall not do more than I have done myself.' He then folded it up and sent it off.

In 1759, in the month of January, his mother died at the great age of ninety, an event which deeply affected him. His reverential affection for her was not abated by years, as indeed he retained all his tender feelings even to the latest period of his life. I have been told, that he regretted much his not having gone to visit his mother for several years, previous to her death. But he was constantly engaged in literary labours which confined him to London; and though he had not the comfort of seeing his aged parent, he contributed liberally to her support.

Soon after this event, he wrote his *Rasselas, Prince of Abyssinia*, that with the profits he might defray the expense of his mother's funeral, and pay some little debts which she had left. He told Sir Joshua Reynolds that he composed it in the evenings of one week, sent it to the press in portions as it was written, and had

never since read it over. None of his writings has been so extensively diffused over Europe; for it has been translated into most, if not all, of the modern languages.

Johnson was now (1760) either very idle, or very busy with his *Shakspeare*. In this year I have not discovered a single private letter written by him to any of his friends. It should seem, however, that he had at this period a floating intention of writing a history of the recent and wonderful successes of the British arms in all quarters of the globe; for among his resolutions or memorandums, September 18, there is, 'Send for books for Hist. of War.'¹ How much is it to be regretted that this intention was not fulfilled!

In 1761 Johnson appears to have done little. He was still, no doubt, proceeding in his edition of *Shakspeare*; but what advances he made in it cannot be ascertained.

The accession of George the Third to the throne of these kingdoms, opened a new and brighter prospect to men of literary merit, who had been honoured with no mark of royal favour in the preceding reign. His

¹ The memorandum, made on his birthday this year, may be quoted as an example of the rules and resolutions which he was in the habit of making:

'Sept. 18. Resolved, D(eo) J(uvante),

To combat notions of obligation:

To apply to study:

To reclaim imaginations:

To consult the resolves on Tetty's coffin:

To rise early:

To study religion:

To go to church:

To drink less strong liquors:

To keep a journal:

To oppose laziness, by doing what is to be done to-morrow:

Rise as early as I can:

Send for Books for Hist. of War:

Put books in order:

Scheme of life.'

present Majesty's education in this country, as well as his taste and beneficence, prompted him to be the patron of science and the arts; and early this year, Johnson having been represented to him as a very learned and good man, without any certain provision, his Majesty was pleased to grant him a pension of three hundred pounds a year. The Earl of Bute, who was then Prime Minister, had the honour to announce this instance of his Sovereign's bounty.

Sir Joshua Reynolds told me that Johnson called on him after his Majesty's intention had been notified to him, and said he wished to consult his friends as to the propriety of his accepting this mark of royal favour, after the definitions which he had given in his *Dictionary* of *pension* and *pensioners*. He said he would not have Sir Joshua's answer till next day, when he would call again, and desired he might think of it. Sir Joshua answered that he was clear to give his opinion then, that there could be no objection to his receiving from the King a reward for literary merit; and that certainly the definitions in his *Dictionary* were not applicable to him.

Johnson, it should seem, was satisfied, for he did not call again till he had accepted the pension, and had waited on Lord Bute to thank him. He then told Sir Joshua that Lord Bute said to him expressly, 'It is not given you for anything you are to do, but for what you have done.' His Lordship, he said, behaved in the handsomest manner. He repeated the words twice, that he might be sure Johnson heard them, and thus set his mind perfectly at ease.

"TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE THE EARL OF BUTE,

'MY LORD,—When the bills were yesterday delivered to me by Mr. Wedderburne, I was informed

by him of the future favours which his Majesty has, by your Lordship's recommendation, been induced to intend for me.

'Bounty always receives part of its value from the manner in which it is bestowed; your Lordship's kindness includes every circumstance that can gratify delicacy, or enforce obligation. You have conferred your favours on a man who has neither alliance nor interest, who has not merited them by services, nor courted them by officiousness; you have spared him the shame of solicitation, and the anxiety of suspense.

'What has been thus elegantly given, will, I hope, not be reproachfully enjoyed; I shall endeavour to give your Lordship the only recompense which generosity desires,—the gratification of finding that your benefits are not improperly bestowed. I am, my Lord, your Lordship's most obliged, most obedient, and most humble servant,

'SAM. JOHNSON.'

'July 20, 1762.'

7

INTRODUCING BOSWELL

THOUGH then but two-and-twenty, I had for several years read Johnson's works with delight and instruction, and had the highest reverence for their author, which had grown in my fancy into a kind of mysterious veneration, by figuring to myself a state of solemn elevated abstraction, in which I supposed him to live in the immense metropolis of London.

When I returned to London in the end of 1762, Mr. Thomas Davies the actor, who then kept a bookseller's shop in Russell-street, Covent-Garden, told me that Johnson was very much his friend, and came frequently to his house, where he more than once invited me to meet him; but by some unlucky accident or other he was prevented from coming to us.

At last, on Monday the 16th of May, 1763, when I was sitting in Mr. Davies's back-parlour, after having drunk tea with him and Mrs. Davies, Johnson unexpectedly came into the shop, and Mr. Davies having perceived him, through the glass-door in the room in which we were sitting, advancing towards us,—he announced his awful approach to me, somewhat in the manner of an actor in the part of Horatio, when he addressed Hamlet on the appearance of his father's ghost, 'Look, my Lord, it comes.'

I found that I had a very perfect idea of Johnson's figure, from the portrait of him painted by Sir Joshua Reynolds soon after he had published his *Dictionary*, in the attitude of sitting in his easy chair in deep meditation, which was the first picture his friend did for him, which Sir Joshua very kindly presented to me, and from which an engraving has been made for this work. Mr. Davies mentioned my name, and respectfully introduced me to him. I was much agitated; and recollecting his prejudice against the Scotch, of which I had heard much, I said to Davies, 'Don't tell where I come from.'—'From Scotland,' cried Davies roguishly. 'Mr. Johnson, (said I) I do indeed come from Scotland, but I cannot help it.' I am willing to flatter myself that I meant this as light pleasantry to soothe and conciliate him, and not as a humiliating abasement at the expense of my country. But however that might be, this speech was somewhat unlucky; for with the quickness

of wit for which he was so remarkable, he seized the expression 'come from Scotland,' which I used in the sense of being of that country, and, as if I had said that I had come away from it, or left it, retorted, 'That, Sir, I find is what a very great many of your countrymen cannot help.' This stroke stunned me a good deal; and when we had sat down, I felt myself not a little embarrassed, and apprehensive of what might come next.

He then addressed himself to Davies: 'What do you think of Garrick? He has refused me an order for the play for Miss Williams, because he knows the house will be full, and that an order would be worth three shillings.' I ventured to say, 'O, Sir, I cannot think Mr. Garrick would grudge such a trifle to you.' 'Sir, (said he, with a stern look) I have known David Garrick longer than you have done: and I know no right you have to talk to me on the subject.' Perhaps I deserved this check; for it was rather presumptuous in me, an entire stranger, to express any doubt of the justice of his animadversion upon his old acquaintance and pupil.

I now felt myself much mortified, and began to think that the hope which I had long indulged of obtaining his acquaintance was blasted. And, in truth, had not my ardour been uncommonly strong, and my resolution uncommonly persevering, so rough a reception might have deterred me for ever from making any further attempts. Fortunately, however, I remained upon the field of battle not wholly discomfited; and was soon rewarded by hearing some of his conversation. I was highly pleased with the extraordinary vigour of his conversation, and regretted that I was drawn away from it by an engagement at another place. I had, for a part of the evening, been left alone with him, and had



'He received me very courteously'

ventured to make an observation now and then, which he received very civilly; [so that I was satisfied that though there was roughness in his manner, there was no ill-nature in his disposition.] Davies followed me to the door, and when I complained to him a little of the hard blows which the great man had given me, he kindly took upon him to console me by saying, 'Don't be uneasy. I can see he likes you very well.'

So upon Tuesday, the 24th of May, I boldly repaired to Johnson. His chambers were on the first floor of No. 1, Inner-Temple-lane, and I entered them with an impression given me by the Reverend Dr. Blair, of Edinburgh, who had been introduced to him not long before, and described his having 'found the Giant in his den.'

He received me very courteously; but it must be confessed, that his apartment, and furniture, and morning dress, were sufficiently uncouth. His brown suit of clothes looked very rusty; he had on a little old shrivelled unpowdered wig, which was too small for his head; his shirt-neck and knees of his breeches were loose; his black worsted stockings ill drawn up; and he had a pair of unbuckled shoes by way of slippers. But all these slovenly particularities were forgotten the moment that he began to talk. Some gentlemen, whom I do not recollect, were sitting with him; and when they went away, I also rose, but he said to me, 'Nay, don't go.' 'Sir, (said I) I am afraid that I intrude upon you. It is benevolent to allow me to sit and hear you.' He seemed pleased with this compliment, which I sincerely paid him, and answered, 'Sir, I am obliged to any man who visits me.'

I did not visit him again till Monday, June 13. He again shook me by the hand at parting, and asked me why I did not come oftener to him. Trusting that I

was now in his good graces, I answered, that he had not given me much encouragement, and reminded him of the check I had received from him at our first interview. 'Poh, poh! (said he, with a complacent smile) never mind these things. Come to me as often as you can. I shall be glad to see you.'

A revolution of some importance in my plan of life had just taken place; for instead of procuring a commission in the foot-guards, which was my own inclination, I had, in compliance with my father's wishes, agreed to study the law; and was soon to set out for Utrecht, to hear the lectures of an excellent civilian in that University, and then to proceed on my travels. Though very desirous of obtaining Dr. Johnson's advice and instructions on the mode of pursuing my studies, I was at this time so occupied, shall I call it? or so dissipated, by the amusements of London, that our next meeting was not till Saturday, June 25, when happening to dine at Clifton's eating-house, in Butcher-row, I was surprised to perceive Johnson come in and take his seat at another table.

The mode of dining, or rather being fed, at such houses in London, is well known to many to be particularly unsocial, as there is no Ordinary, or united company, but each person has his own mess, and is under no obligation to hold any intercourse with anyone. A liberal and full-minded man, however, who loves to talk, will break through this churlish and unsocial restraint.

Johnson and an Irish gentleman got into a dispute concerning the cause of some part of mankind being black. 'Why, Sir, (said Johnson) it has been accounted for in three ways: either by supposing that they are the posterity of Ham, who was cursed, or that God at first created two kinds of men, one black and another white;

or that by the heat of the sun the skin is scorched, and so acquires a sooty hue. This matter has been much canvassed among naturalists, but has never been brought to any certain issue.' What the Irishman said is totally obliterated from my mind, but I remember that he became very warm and intemperate in his expressions; upon which Johnson rose, and quietly walked away. When he had retired, his antagonist took his revenge, as he thought, by saying, 'He has a most ungainly figure, and an affectation of pomposity, unworthy of a man of genius.'

Johnson had not observed that I was in the room. I followed him, however, and he agreed to meet me in the evening at the Mitre. I called on him, and we went thither at nine. We had a good supper, and port wine, of which he then sometimes drank a bottle. The orthodox high-church sound of the MITRE,—the figure and manner of the celebrated SAMUEL JOHNSON,—the extraordinary power and precision of his conversation, and the pride arising from finding myself admitted as his companion, produced a variety of sensations, and a pleasing elevation of mind, beyond what I had ever before experienced.

JOHNSON: 'Your going abroad, Sir, and breaking off idle habits, may be of great importance to you. I would go where there are courts and learned men. There is a good deal of Spain that has not been perambulated. I would have you go thither. A man of inferior talents to yours may furnish us with useful observations upon that country.' His supposing me, at that period of life, capable of writing an account of my travels that would deserve to be read, elated me not a little.

My next meeting with Johnson was on Friday the 1st of July, when he and I and Dr. Goldsmith supped together at the Mitre. I was before this time pretty

well acquainted with Goldsmith, who was one of the brightest ornaments of the Johnsonian school. Goldsmith's respectful attachment to Johnson was then at its height, for his own literary reputation had not yet distinguished him so much as to excite a vain desire of competition with his great Master. He had increased my admiration of the goodness of Johnson's heart, by incidental remarks in the course of conversation, such as, when I mentioned Mr. Levett whom he entertained under his roof, 'He is poor and honest, which is recommendation enough to Johnson;' and when I wondered that he was very kind to a man of whom I had heard a very bad character, 'He is now become miserable, and that insures the protection of Johnson.'

At this time *Miss Williams*,¹ as she was then called, though she did not reside with him in the Temple under his roof, but had lodgings in Bolt-court, Fleet-street, had so much of his attention, that he every night drank tea with her before he went home, however late it might be, and she always sat up for him. This, it may be fairly conjectured, was not alone a proof of his regard for *her*, but of his own unwillingness to go into solitude, before that unseasonable hour at which he had habituated himself to expect the oblivion of repose. Dr. Goldsmith, being a privileged man, went with him this night, strutting away, and calling to me with an air of superiority, 'I go to Miss Williams.' I confess, I then envied him this mighty privilege, of which he seemed so proud; but it was not long before I obtained the same mark of distinction.

¹ A poor blind lady.

BOSWELL LISTENS

ON Wednesday, July 6, he was engaged to sup with me at my lodgings, in Downing-street, Westminster. But on the preceding night my landlord having behaved very rudely to me and some company who were with me, I had resolved not to remain another night in his house. I was exceedingly uneasy at the awkward appearance I supposed I should make to Johnson and the other gentlemen whom I had invited, not being able to receive them at home, and being obliged to order supper at the Mitre. I went to Johnson in the morning, and talked of it as a serious distress. He laughed and said, 'Consider, Sir, how insignificant this will appear a twelvemonth hence. There is nothing (continued he) in this mighty misfortune; nay, we shall be better at the Mitre.'

I told him that I had been at Sir John Fielding's office, complaining of my landlord, and had been informed, that though I had taken my lodgings for a year, I might, upon proof of his bad behaviour, quit them when I pleased, without being under an obligation to pay rent for any longer time than while I possessed them. 'Why, Sir, (said he) I suppose this must be the law, since you have been told so in Bow-street. But, if your landlord could hold you to your bargain, and the lodgings should be yours for a year, you may certainly use them as you think fit. So, Sir, you may quarter two life-guardsmen upon him; or you may send the greatest scoundrel you can find into your apartments; or you may say that you want to make some experiments in natural philosophy, and may burn a large quantity of asafoetida in his house.'

I had as my guests this evening at the Mitre tavern, Dr. Johnson, Dr. Goldsmith, Mr. Thomas Davies, Mr. Eccles, an Irish gentleman, and the Reverend Mr John Ogilvie, who was desirous of being in company with my illustrious friend

Mr. Ogilvie was unlucky enough to choose for the topic of his conversation the praises of his native country. He began with saying, that there was very rich land round Edinburgh. Goldsmith, who had studied physic there, contradicted this, very untruly, with a sneering laugh. Disconcerted a little by this, Mr. Ogilvie then took new ground, where, I suppose, he thought himself perfectly safe; for he observed, that Scotland had a great many noble wild prospects.

JOHNSON: 'I believe, Sir, you have a great many. Norway, too, has noble wild prospects; and Lapland is remarkable for prodigious noble wild prospects. But, Sir, let me tell you, the noblest prospect which a Scotchman ever sees, is the high road that leads him to England!' This unexpected and pointed sally produced a roar of applause.

On the 14th we had another evening by ourselves at the Mitre. It happening to be a very rainy night, I made some common-place observations on the relaxation of nerves and depression of spirits which such weather occasioned, adding, however, that it was good for the vegetable creation. Johnson, who denied that the temperature of the air had any influence on the human frame, answered, with a smile of ridicule, 'Why yes, Sir, it is good for vegetables, and for the animals who eat those vegetables, and for the animals who eat those animals.'

To such a degree of unrestrained frankness had he now accustomed me, that in the course of this evening I talked of the numerous reflections which had been

thrown out against him on account of his having accepted a pension from his present Majesty. 'Why, Sir, (said he, with a hearty laugh) it is a mighty foolish noise that they make. I have accepted of a pension as a reward which has been thought due to my literary merit; and now that I have this pension, I am the same man in every respect that I have ever been; I retain the same principles. It is true, that I cannot now curse (smiling) the House of Hanover; nor would it be decent for me to drink King James's health in the wine that King George gives me money to pay for. But, Sir, I think that the pleasure of cursing the House of Hanover, and drinking King James's health, are amply overbalanced by three hundred pounds a year.' When I mentioned the same idle clamour to him several years afterwards, he said, with a smile, 'I wish my pension were twice as large, that they might make twice as much noise.'

He advised me, when abroad, to be as much as I could with the professors in the Universities, and with the clergy; for from their conversation I might expect the best accounts of every thing, in whatever country I should be, with the additional advantage of keeping my learning alive.

He was of Lord Essex's opinion, who advises his kinsman, Roger Earl of Rutland, 'rather to go an hundred miles to speak with one wise man, than five miles to see a fair town.'

He recommended me to keep a journal of my life, full and unreserved. He said it would be a very good exercise, and would yield me great satisfaction when the particulars were faded from my remembrance. He counselled me to keep it private, and said I might surely have a friend who would burn it in case of my death. From this habit I have been enabled to give

the world so many anecdotes which would otherwise be lost to posterity. I mentioned that I was afraid I put into my journals too many little incidents.

JOHNSON: 'There is nothing, Sir, too little for so little a creature as man. It is by studying little things that we attain the great art of having as little misery and as much happiness as possible.'

Next morning Mr. Dempster happened to call on me, and was so much struck even with the imperfect account which I gave him of Dr. Johnson's conversation, that to his honour be it recorded, when I complained that drinking port and sitting up late with him affected my nerves for some time after, he said, 'One had better be palsied at eighteen than not to keep company with such a man.'

On Tuesday, July 18, I found tall Sir Thomas Robinson sitting with Johnson. Sir Thomas said, that the king of Prussia valued himself upon three things:—upon being a hero, a musician, and an author.

JOHNSON: 'Pretty well, Sir, for one man. As to his being an author, I have not looked at his poetry; but his prose is poor stuff. He writes just as you might suppose Voltaire's footboy to do, who has been his amanuensis. He has such parts as the valet might have, and about as much of the colouring of the style as might be got by transcribing his works.'

When I was at Ferney, I repeated this to Voltaire, in order to reconcile him somewhat to Johnson, whom he, in affecting the English mode of expression, had previously characterised as 'a superstitious dog,' but after hearing such criticism on Frederick the Great, with whom he was then on bad terms, he exclaimed, 'An honest fellow !'

Mr. Levett this day shewed me Dr. Johnson's library, which was contained in two garrets over his

chambers. I found a number of good books, but very dusty and in great confusion. The floor was strewn with manuscript leaves, in Johnson's own handwriting, which I beheld with a degree of veneration, supposing they perhaps might contain portions of *The Rambler* or of *Rasselas*. I observed an apparatus for chemical experiments, of which Johnson was all his life very fond. The place seemed to be very favourable for retirement and meditation.

Johnson told me that he went up thither without mentioning it to his servant, when he wanted to study, secure from interruption; for he would not allow his servant to say he was not at home when he really was. 'A servant's strict regard for truth (said he) must be weakened by such a practice. A philosopher may know that it is merely a form of denial; but few servants are such nice distinguishers. If I accustom a servant to tell a lie for *me*, have I not reason to apprehend that he will tell many lies for *himself*?'

On Wednesday, July 20, Dr Johnson, Mr. Dempster, and my uncle Dr. Boswell, who happened to be now in London, supped with me at my chambers in Farrar's-buildings, at the bottom of Inner-Temple-lane.

JOHNSON: 'Pity is not natural to man. Children are always cruel. Pity is acquired and improved by the cultivation of reason. We may have uneasy sensations from seeing a creature in distress, without pity; for we have not pity unless we wish to relieve them. When I am on my way to dine with a friend, and finding it late, have bid the coachman make haste, if I happen to attend when he whips his horses, I may feel unpleasantly that the animals are put to pain, but I do not wish him to desist. No, Sir, I wish him to drive on.'

Rousseau's treatise on the inequality of mankind was at this time a fashionable topic. It gave rise to an

observation by Mr Dempster, that the advantages of fortune and rank were nothing to a wise man, who ought to value only merit.

JOHNSON: 'If man were a savage, living in the woods by himself, this might be true; but in civilized society we all depend upon each other, and our happiness is very much owing to the good opinion of mankind. Now, Sir, in civilized society, external advantages make us more respected. A man with a good coat upon his back meets with a better reception than he who has a bad one. Sir, you may analyse this, and say, What is there in it? But that will avail you nothing, for it is part of a general system. Pound St Paul's Church into atoms, and consider any single atom; it is, to be sure, good for nothing: but, put all these atoms together, and you have St. Paul's Church. So it is with human felicity, which is made up of many ingredients, each of which may be shewn to be very insignificant.

'In civilized society, personal merit will not serve you so much as money will. Sir, you may make the experiment. Go into the street, and give one man a lecture on morality, and another a shilling, and see which will respect you most.

'If you wish only to support nature, Sir William Petty fixes your allowance at three pounds a year; but as times are much altered, let us call it six pounds. This sum will fill your belly, shelter you from the weather, and even get you a strong lasting coat, supposing it to be made of good bull's hide. Now, Sir, all beyond this is artificial, and is desired in order to obtain a greater degree of respect from our fellow-creatures. And, Sir, if six hundred a year procure a man more consequence and, of course, more happiness than six pounds a year, the same proportion will hold

as to six thousand, and so on, as far as opulence can be carried. Perhaps he who has a large fortune may not be so happy as he who has a small one, but that must proceed from other causes than from his having the large fortune: for, *ceteris paribus*, he who is rich in a civilized society, must be happier than he who is poor; as riches, if properly used, (and it is a man's own fault if they are not) must be productive of the highest advantages. Money, to be sure, of itself is of no use; for its only use is to part with it.

'When I was a boy, I used always to choose the wrong side of a debate, because most ingenious things, that is to say, most new things, could be said upon it. Sir, there is nothing for which you may not muster up more plausible arguments, than those which are urged against wealth and other external advantages. Why, now, there is stealing; why should it be thought a crime? When we consider by what unjust methods property has been often acquired, and that what was unjustly got it must be unjust to keep, where is the harm in one man's taking the property of another from him? Besides, Sir, when we consider the bad use that many people make of their property, and how much better use the thief may make of it, it may be defended as a very allowable practice. Yet, Sir, the experience of mankind has discovered stealing to be so very bad a thing, that they make no scruple to hang a man for it.

'When I was running about this town a very poor fellow, I was a great arguer for the advantages of poverty; but I was, at the same time, very sorry to be poor. Sir, all the arguments which are brought to represent poverty as no evil, shew it to be evidently a great evil. You never find people labouring to convince you that you may live very happily upon a plentiful

fortune — So you hear people talking how miserable a king must be; and yet they all wish to be in his place.'

It was suggested that kings must be unhappy, because they are deprived of the greatest of all satisfactions, easy and unreserved society.

JOHNSON: 'That is an ill-founded notion. Being a king does not exclude a man from such society. Great kings have always been social. The King of Prussia, the only great king at present, is very social. Charles the Second, the last King of England who was a man of parts, was social; and our Henrys and Edwards were all social.'

I said I considered distinction of rank to be of so much importance in civilized society, that if I were asked on the same day to dine with the first duke of England, and with the first man in Britain for genius, I should hesitate which to prefer.

JOHNSON: 'To be sure, Sir, if you were to dine only once, and it were never to be known where you dined, you would choose rather to dine with the first man for genius; out to gain most respect, you should dine with the first duke in England. For nine people in ten that you meet with, would have a higher opinion of you for having dined with a duke; and the great genius himself would receive you better, because you had been with the great duke.'

The next night, Mr. Johnson and I supped in a private room at the Turk's Head coffee-house, in the Strand. 'I encourage this house; (said he) for the mistress of it is a good, civil woman, and has not much business.'

'Sir, I love the acquaintance of young people; because, in the first place, I don't like to think myself growing old. In the next place, young acquaintances must last longest, if they do last; and then, Sir, young men have more virtue than old men, they have more

generous sentiments in every respect. I love the young dogs of this age: they have more wit and humour and knowledge of life than we had; but then the dogs are not so good scholars. Sir, in my early years I read very hard. It is a sad reflection, but a true one, that I knew almost as much at eighteen as I do now. My judgment, to be sure, was not so good; but I had all the facts. I remember very well, when I was at Oxford, an old gentleman said to me, "Young man, ply you book diligently now, and acquire a stock of knowledge; for when years come upon you, you will find that poring upon books will be but an irksome task."'

Johnson mentioned to me now, for the first time, that he had been distressed by melancholy, and for that reason had been obliged to fly from study and meditation, to the dissipating variety of life. Against melancholy he recommended constant occupation of mind, a great deal of exercise, moderation in eating and drinking, and especially to shun drinking at night. He said melancholy people were apt to fly to intemperance for relief, but that it sunk them much deeper in misery. He observed, that labouring men, who work hard, and live sparingly, are seldom or never troubled with low spirits.

He insisted on the duty of maintaining subordination of rank. 'Sir, I would no more deprive a nobleman of his respect, than of his money. I consider myself as acting a part in the great system of society, and I do to others as I would have them to do to me. I would behave to a nobleman as I should expect he would behave to me, were I a nobleman and he Sam. Johnson.

'Sir, there is one Mrs. Macaulay in this town, a great republican. One day when I was at her house, I put on a very grave countenance, and said to her, "Madam, I am now become a convert to your way of

thinking. I am convinced that all mankind are upon an equal footing; and to give you an unquestionable proof, Madam, that I am in earnest, here is a very sensible, civil, well-behaved fellow-citizen, your footman, I desire that he may be allowed to sit down and dine with us." I thus, Sir, showed her the absurdity of the levelling doctrine. She has never liked me since. Sir, your levellers wish to level *down* as far as themselves; but they cannot bear levelling *up* to themselves. They would all have some people under them; why not then have some people above them ?'

I mentioned a certain author who disgusted me by his forwardness, and by shewing no deference to noblemen into whose company he was admitted.

JOHNSON: 'Suppose a shoemaker should claim an equality with him, as he does with a lord, how he would stare! "Why, Sir, do you stare? (says the shoemaker) I do great service to society. 'Tis true, I am paid for doing it; but so are you, Sir. and, I am sorry to say it, paid better than I am, for doing something not so necessary. For mankind could do better without your books, than without my shoes" Thus, Sir, there would be a perpetual struggle for precedence, were there no fixed invariable rules for the distinction of rank, which creates no jealousy, as it is allowed to be accidental.'

I mentioned that Sir James Macdonald had said to me, that he had never seen Mr. Johnson, but he had a great respect for him, though at the same time it was mixed with some degree of terror.

JOHNSON: 'Sir, if he were to be acquainted with me, it might lessen both.'

The mention of this gentleman led us to talk of the Western Islands of Scotland, to visit which he expressed a wish that then appeared to me a very romantic fancy, which I little thought would be afterwards realised.

He told me that his father had put Martin's account of those islands into his hands when he was very young, and that he was highly pleased with it; that he was particularly struck with the St. Kilda man's notion that the high church of Glasgow had been hollowed out of a rock. He said he would go to the Hebrides with me, when I returned from my travels, unless some very good companion should offer when I was absent, which he did not think probable; adding, 'There are few people to whom I take so much as to you.' And when I talked of my leaving England, he said with a very affectionate air, 'My dear Boswell, I should be very unhappy at parting, did I think we were not to meet again.'

On Saturday, July 30, Dr. Johnson and I took a sculler at the Temple-stairs, and set out for Greenwich. I asked him if he really thought a knowledge of the Greek and Latin languages an essential requisite to a good education.

JOHNSON: 'Most certainly, Sir; for those who know them have a very great advantage over those who do not. Nay, Sir, it is wonderful what a difference learning makes upon people even in the common intercourse of life, which does not appear to be much connected with it.' 'And yet, (said I) people go through the world very well, and carry on the business of life to good advantage, without learning.'

JOHNSON: 'Why, Sir, that may be true in cases where learning cannot possibly be of any use; for instance, this boy rows us as well without learning, as if he could sing the song of Orpheus to the Argonauts, who were the first sailors.' He then called the boy, 'What would you give, my lad, to know about the Argonauts?' 'Sir, (said the boy) I would give what I have.' Johnson was much pleased with his answer, and we gave him a



‘What would you give, my lad, to know about the Argonauts?’

double fare. Dr. Johnson then turning to me, 'Sir, (said he) a desire for knowledge is the natural feeling of mankind; and every human being whose mind is not debauched, will be willing to give all that he has to get knowledge.'

We landed at the Old Swan, and walked to Billingsgate, where we took oars, and moved smoothly along the silver Thames. It was a very fine day. We were entertained with the immense number and variety of ships that were lying at anchor, and with the beautiful country on each side of the river.

I was much pleased to find myself with Johnson at Greenwich, which he celebrates in his *London* as a favourite scene. I had the poem in my pocket, and read the lines aloud with enthusiasm:

On Thames's banks in silent thought we stood:
Where Greenwich smiles upon the silver flood:
Pleas'd with the seat which gave ELIZA birth,
We kneel, and kiss the consecrated earth.

Afterwards he entered upon the business of the day, which was to give me his advice as to a course of study. I recollect with admiration an animating blaze of eloquence, which roused every intellectual power in me to the highest pitch, but must have dazzled me so much, that my memory could not preserve the substance of his discourse, for the note which I find of it is no more than this:—'He ran over the grand scale of human knowledge; advised me to select some particular branch to excel in, but to acquire a little of every kind.'

We walked in the evening in Greenwich Park. He asked me, I suppose by way of trying my disposition, 'Is not this very fine?' Having no exquisite relish of the beauties of nature, and being more delighted with

'the busy hum of men,' I answered, 'Yes, Sir; but not equal to Fleet-street.'

JOHNSON: 'You are right, Sir '

9

ON THE ROAD TO HARWICH

ON Friday, August 5, we set out early in the morning in the Harwich stage-coach. A fat elderly gentlewoman, and a young Dutchman, seemed the most inclined among us to conversation. At the inn where we dined, the gentlewoman said that she had done her best to educate her children; and particularly, that she had never suffered them to be a moment idle.

JOHNSON: 'I wish, Madam, you would educate me too; for I have been an idle fellow all my life.'

'I am sure, Sir, (said she) you have not been idle.'

JOHNSON: 'Nay, Madam, it is very true; and that gentleman there (pointing to me) has been idle. He was idle at Edinburgh. His father sent him to Glasgow, where he continued to be idle. He then came to London, where he has been very idle; and now he is going to Utrecht, where he will be as idle as ever.'

I asked him privately how he could expose me so.

'Poh, poh ! (said he) they knew nothing about you, and will think of it no more.'

In the afternoon the gentlewoman talked violently against the Roman Catholics, and of the horrors of the Inquisition. To the utter astonishment of all the passengers but myself, who knew that he could talk upon any side of a question, he defended the Inquisition, and maintained, that 'false doctrine should be

checked on its first appearance; that the civil power should unite with the church in punishing those who dared to attack the established religion, and that such only were punished by the Inquisition.'

He had in his pocket *Pomponius Mela de situ Orbis*, in which he read occasionally, and seemed very intent upon ancient geography. Though by no means nig-gardly, his attention to what was generally right was so minute, that having observed at one of the stages that I ostentatiously gave a shilling to the coachman, when the custom was for each passenger to give only sixpence, he took me aside and scolded me, saying that what I had done would make the coachman dissatisfied with all the rest of the passengers, who gave him no more than his due.

Having stopped a night at Colchester, Johnson talked of that town with veneration, for having stood a siege for Charles the First. The Dutchman alone now remained with us. He spoke English tolerably well; and thinking to recommend himself to us by expatiating on the superiority of the criminal juris-prudence of this country over that of Holland, he inveighed against the barbarity of putting an accused person to the torture, in order to force a confession. But Johnson was as ready for this, as for the Inquisi-tion. 'Why, Sir, you do not, I find, understand the law of your own country. The torture in Holland is con-sidered as a favour to an accused person, for no man is put to the torture there, unless there is as much evidence against him as would amount to conviction in England. An accused person among you, therefore, has one chance more to escape punishment, than those who are tried among us.'

At supper this night he talked of good eating with uncommon satisfaction. 'Some people (said he) have

a foolish way of not minding, or pretending not to mind, what they eat. For my part, I mind my belly very studiously, and very carefully; for I look upon it, that he who does not mind his belly will hardly mind anything else.' I never knew any man who relished good eating more than he did. When at table, he was totally absorbed in the business of the moment; his looks seemed rivetted to his plate; nor would he, unless when in very high company, say one word, or even pay the least attention to what was said by others, till he had satisfied his appetite, which was so fierce, and indulged with such intenseness, that while in the act of eating, the veins of his forehead swelled, and generally a strong perspiration was visible. To those whose sensations were delicate, this could not but be disgusting; and it was doubtless not very suitable to the character of a philosopher, who should be distinguished by self-command.

But it must be owned, that Johnson, though he could be rigidly *abstemious*, was not a *temperate* man either in eating or drinking. He could refrain, but he could not use moderately. He told me that he had fasted two days without inconvenience, and that he had never been hungry but once. Those who beheld with wonder how much he ate upon all occasions when his dinner was to his taste, could not easily conceive what he must have meant by hunger; and not only was he remarkable for the extraordinary quantity which he ate, but he was, or affected to be, a man of very nice discernment in the science of cookery. He used to descant critically on the dishes which had been at table where he had dined or supped, and to recollect very minutely what he had liked.

When invited to dine, even with an intimate friend, he was not pleased if something better than a plain

dinner was not prepared for him. I have heard him say on such an occasion, 'This was a good dinner enough, to be sure; but it was not a dinner to *ask* a man to.' On the other hand, he was wont to express, with great glee, his satisfaction when he had been entertained quite to his mind. One day when we had dined with his neighbour and landlord in Bolt-court, Mr. Allen, the printer, whose old housekeeper had studied his taste in every thing, he pronounced this eulogy: 'Sir, we could not have had a better dinner, had there been a *Synod of Cooks*.'

Next day we got to Harwich to dinner; and my passage in the packet-boat to Helvoetsluys being secured, and my baggage put on board, we dined at our inn by ourselves. I happened to say that it would be terrible if he should not find a speedy opportunity of returning to London, and be confined in so dull a place.

JOHNSON: 'Don't, Sir, accustom yourself to use big words for little matters. It would *not* be terrible, though I *were* to be detained some time here.'

My revered friend walked down with me to the beach, where we embraced and parted with tenderness, and engaged to correspond with letters. I said, 'I hope, Sir, you will not forget me in my absence.'

JOHNSON: 'Nay, Sir, it is more likely you should forget me, than that I should forget you.' As the vessel put out to sea, I kept my eyes upon him for a considerable time, while he remained rolling his majestic frame in his usual manner; and at last I perceived him walk back into the town, and he disappeared.

OLD FRIENDS AND NEW

IN February, 1764, was founded that CLUB which existed long without a name, but at Mr. Garrick's funeral became distinguished by the title of THE LITERARY CLUB. Sir Joshua Reynolds had the merit of being the first proposer of it, to which Johnson acceded; and the original members were, Sir Joshua Reynolds, Dr. Johnson, Mr. Edmund Burke, Dr. Nugent, Mr. Beauclerk, Mr. Langton, Dr. Goldsmith, Mr. Chamier, and Sir John Hawkins. They met at the Turk's Head, in Gerrard-street, Soho, one evening in every week, at seven, and generally continued their conversation till a pretty late hour.

Not very long after the institution of our club, Sir Joshua Reynolds was speaking of it to Garrick. 'I like it much; (said he) I think I shall be of you.' When Sir Joshua mentioned this to Dr. Johnson, he was much displeased with the actor's conceit. '*He'll be of us*; (said Johnson) how does he know we will *permit* him? The first duke in England has no right to hold such language.' However, when Garrick was regularly proposed some time afterwards, Johnson, though he had taken a momentary offence at his arrogance, warmly and kindly supported him, and he was accordingly elected, was a most agreeable member, and continued to attend our meetings to the time of his death.

In this year, except what he may have done in revising *Shakspeare*, we do not find that he laboured much in literature. The ease and independence to which he had at last attained by royal munificence, increased his natural indolence

About this time he was afflicted with a very severe return of the hypochondriac disorder, which was ever lurking about him. He was so ill, as, notwithstanding his remarkable love of company, to be entirely averse to society, the most fatal symptom of that malady. Dr. Adams told me, that, as an old friend, he was admitted to visit him, and that he found him in a deplorable state, sighing, groaning, talking to himself, and restlessly walking from room to room. He then used this emphatical expression of the misery which he felt: 'I would consent to have a limb amputated to recover my spirits.' Talking to himself was, indeed, one of his singularities ever since I knew him.

He had another particularity, of which none of his friends ever ventured to ask an explanation. It appeared to me some superstitious habit, which he had contracted early, and from which he had never called upon his reason to disentangle him. This was his anxious care to go out or in at a door or passage by a certain number of steps from a certain point, or at least so as that either his right or his left foot (I am not certain which) should constantly make the first actual movement when he came close to the door or passage. Thus I conjecture: for I have, upon innumerable occasions, observed him suddenly stop, and then seem to count his steps with a deep earnestness; and when he had neglected or gone wrong in this sort of magical movement, I have seen him go back again, put himself in a proper posture to begin the ceremony, and, having gone through it, break from his abstraction, walk briskly on, and join his companion.

It is requisite to mention, that while talking or even musing as he sat in his chair, he commonly held his head to one side towards his right shoulder, and shook it in a tremulous manner, moving his body backwards

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Mrs. Thrale, and they so much pleased with him, that his invitations to their house were more and more frequent, till at last he became one of the family, and an apartment was appropriated to him, both in their house in Southwark, and in their villa at Streatham.

Johnson had a very sincere esteem for Mr. Thrale.

'I know no man (said he) who is more master of his wife and family than Thrale. If he but holds up a finger, he is obeyed. It is a great mistake to suppose that she is above him in literary attainments. She is more flippant, but he has ten times her learning: he is a regular scholar; but her learning is that of a school-boy in one of the lower forms.'

Mr. Thrale was tall, well proportioned, and stately. As for *Madam*, or *my Mistress*, by which epithets Johnson used to mention Mrs. Thrale, she was short, plump, and brisk. She has herself given us a lively view of the idea which Johnson had of her person, on her appearing before him in a dark-coloured gown; 'You little creatures should never wear those sort of clothes, however; they are unsuitable in every way. What! have not all insects gay colours?'

Nothing could be more fortunate for Johnson than this connection. He had at Mr. Thrale's all the comforts and even luxuries of life; his melancholy was diverted, and his irregular habits lessened by association with an agreeable and well-ordered family. He was treated with the utmost respect, and even affection. The vivacity of Mrs. Thrale's literary talk roused him to cheerfulness and exertion, even when they were alone. But this was not often the case; for he found here a constant succession of what gave him the highest enjoyment: the society of the learned, the witty, and the eminent in every way, who were assembled in numerous companies, called forth his wonderful powers,

and gratified him with admiration, to which no man could be insensible.

In the October of this year he at length gave to the world his edition of *Shakspeare*. Johnson, by candidly admitting the faults of his poet, had the more credit in bestowing on him deserved and indisputable praise; and doubtless none of all his panegyrists have done him half so much honour. \ Their praise was, like that of a counsel, upon his own side of the cause; Johnson's was like the grave, well-considered, and impartial opinion of the judge, which falls from his lips with weight, and is received with reverence. \

In 1764 and 1765 it should seem that Dr. Johnson was so busily employed with his edition of *Shakspeare*, as to have had little leisure for any other literary exertion, or, indeed, even for private correspondence. He did not favour me with a single letter for more than two years. Notwithstanding his long silence, I never omitted to write to him when I had any thing worthy of communicating. I generally kept copies of my letters to him, that I might have a full view of our correspondence, and never be at a loss to understand any reference in his letters.

I returned to London in February, and found Dr. Johnson in a good house in Johnson's Court, Fleet-street, in which he had accommodated Miss Williams with an apartment on the ground floor, while Mr. Levett occupied his post in the garret: his faithful Francis¹ was still attending upon him. He received me with much kindness. I told him that Voltaire, in a conversation with me, had distinguished Pope and Dryden thus:—
'Pope drives a handsome chariot, with a couple of neat

¹ Francis Barber, a black slave, was brought to England from Jamaica in 1750, received his freedom when his master died, and entered Johnson's service in 1752.

trim nags; Dryden a coach, and six stately horses.

JOHNSON: 'Why, Sir, the truth is, they both drive coaches and six, but Dryden's horses are either galloping or stumbling; Pope's go at a steady even trot.'

He said of Goldsmith's *Traveller*, which had been published in my absence, 'There has not been so fine a poem since Pope's time.'

At night I supped with him at the Mitre tavern, that we might renew our social intimacy at the original place of meeting. But there was now a considerable difference in his way of living. Having had an illness, in which he was advised to leave off wine, he had, from that period, continued to abstain from it, and drank only water, or lemonade.

Dr. Johnson was very kind this evening, and said to me, 'You have now lived five-and-twenty years, and you have employed them well.' 'Alas, Sir, (said I) I fear not. Do I know history? Do I know mathematics? Do I know law?'

JOHNSON: 'Why, Sir, though you may know no science so well as to be able to teach it, and no profession so well as to be able to follow it, your general mass of knowledge of books and men renders you very capable to make yourself master of any science, or fit yourself for any profession.'

I talked of the mode adopted by some to rise in the world, by courting great men, and asked him whether he had ever submitted to it.

JOHNSON: 'Why, Sir, I never was near enough to great men, to court them. You may be prudently attached to great men, and yet independent. You are not to do what you think wrong; and, Sir, you are to calculate, and not pay too dear for what you get. You must not give a shilling's worth of court for sixpence worth of good. But if you can get a shilling's worth of good

for sixpence worth of court, you are a fool if you do not pay court.'

I talked to him a great deal of what I had seen in Corsica, and of my intention to publish an account of it. He encouraged me by saying, 'You cannot go to the bottom of the subject; but all that you tell us will be new to us. Give us as many anecdotes as you can.'

Our next meeting at the Mitre was on Saturday the 15th of February. I having mentioned that I had passed some time with Rousseau in his wild retreat, and having quoted some remark made by Mr. Wilkes,¹ with whom I had spent many pleasant hours in Italy, Johnson said (sarcastically) 'It seems, Sir, you have kept very good company abroad, Rousseau and Wilkes!'

Thinking it enough to defend one at a time, I said nothing as to my gay friend, but answered with a smile, 'My dear Sir, you don't call Rousseau bad company. Do you really think *him* a bad man?'

JOHNSON: 'Sir, if you are talking jestingly of this, I don't talk with you. If you mean to be serious, I think him one of the worst of men; a rascal who ought to be hunted out of society, as he has been. Three or four nations have expelled him; and it is a shame that he is protected in this country.'

BOSWELL: 'I don't deny, Sir, but that his novel may, perhaps, do harm, but I cannot think his intention was bad.'

JOHNSON: 'Sir, that will not do. We cannot prove any man's intentions to be bad. You may shoot a man through the head, and say you intended to miss

¹ An M.P. expelled from Parliament and outlawed for an attack on the King's speech, 1763. He was allowed to return to England, but was again expelled from Parliament for libel, 1769. Re-elected in 1771, he became Lord Mayor of London in 1774.

him; but the judge will order you to be hanged. An alleged want of intention, when evil is committed, will not be allowed in a court of justice. Rousseau, Sir, is a very bad man. I would sooner sign a sentence for his transportation, than that of any felon who has gone from the Old Bailey these many years. Yes, I should like to have him work in the plantations.'

BOSWELL: 'Sir, do you think him as bad a man as Voltaire?'

JOHNSON: 'Why, Sir, it is difficult to settle the proportion of iniquity between them.'

One evening, when a young gentleman teased him with an account of the infidelity of his servant, who, he said, would not believe the scriptures, because he could not read them in the original tongues, and be sure that they were not invented, 'Why, foolish fellow, (said Johnson) has he any better authority for almost every thing that he believes?'

BOSWELL: 'Then the vulgar, Sir, never can know they are right, but must submit themselves to the learned.'

JOHNSON: 'To be sure, Sir. The vulgar are the children of the State, and must be taught like children.'

BOSWELL: 'Then, Sir, a poor Turk must be a Mahometan, just as a poor Englishman must be a Christian?'

JOHNSON: 'Why, yes, Sir; and what then? This now is such stuff as I used to talk to my mother, when I first began to think myself a clever fellow; and she ought to have whipt me for it.'

Another evening Dr. Goldsmith and I called on him, with the hope of prevailing on him to sup with us at the Mitre. We found him indisposed, and resolved not to go abroad. 'Come, then, (said Goldsmith) we will not go to the Mitre to-night, since we cannot have the big man with us.' Johnson then called for a bottle of

port, of which Goldsmith and I partook, while our friend, now a water-drinker, sat by us

GOLDSMITH: 'I think, Mr. Johnson, you don't go near the theatres now. You give yourself no more concern about a new play, than if you had never had any thing to do with the stage'

JOHNSON. 'Why, Sir, our tastes greatly alter. The lad does not care for the child's rattle. But as we advance in the journey of life, we drop some of the things which have pleased us, whether it be that we are fatigued and don't choose to carry so many things any farther, or that we find other things which we like better.'

BOSWELL: 'But, Sir, why don't you give us something in some other way?'

GOLDSMITH: 'Ay, Sir, we have a claim upon you.'

JOHNSON: 'No, Sir, I am not obliged to do any more. No man is obliged to do as much as he can do. A man is to have part of his life to himself. If a soldier has fought a good many campaigns, he is not to be blamed if he retires to ease and tranquillity. A physician who has practised long in a great city, may be excused if he retires to a small town, and takes less practice. Now, Sir, the good I can do by my conversation bears the same proportion to the good I can do by my writings, that the practice of a physician, retired to a small town, does to his practice in a great city'

BOSWELL: 'But I wonder, Sir, you have not more pleasure in writing than in not writing.'

JOHNSON: 'Sir, you *may* wonder'

GEORGE III

IN FEBRUARY, 1767, Johnson was honoured by a private conversation with his Majesty, in the library at the Queen's house. He had frequently visited those splendid rooms and noble collection of books, which he used to say were more numerous and curious than he supposed any person could have made in the time which the King had employed. Mr. Barnard, the librarian, took care that he should have every accommodation that could contribute to his ease and convenience, while indulging his literary taste in that place; so that he had here a very agreeable resource at leisure hours.

His Majesty, having been informed of his occasional visits, was pleased to signify a desire that he should be told when Dr. Johnson came next to the library. Accordingly, the next time that Dr. Johnson did come, as soon as he was fairly engaged with a book, on which, while he sat by the fire, he seemed quite intent, Mr. Barnard stole round to the apartment where the King was, and, in obedience to his Majesty's commands, mentioned that Dr. Johnson was then in the library. His Majesty said he was at leisure, and would go to him; upon which Mr. Barnard took one of the candles that stood on the King's table, and lighted his Majesty through a suite of rooms, till they came to a private door into the library, of which his Majesty had the key. Being entered, Mr. Barnard stepped forward hastily to Dr. Johnson, who was still in a profound study, and whispered him, 'Sir, here is the King.' Johnson started up, and stood still. His Majesty approached him, and at once was courteously easy.

His Majesty began by observing, that he understood



George III in the Royal Library

he came sometimes to the library; and then mentioning his having heard that the Doctor had been lately at Oxford, asked him if he was not fond of going thither. To which Johnson answered, that he was indeed fond of going to Oxford sometimes, but was likewise glad to come back again. The King then asked him what they were doing at Oxford. Johnson answered, he could not much commend their diligence, but that in some respects they were mended, for they had put their press under better regulations, and were at that time printing Polybius. '

He was then asked whether there were better libraries at Oxford or Cambridge. He answered, he believed the Bodleian was larger than any they had at Cambridge; at the same time adding, 'I hope, whether we have more books or not than they have at Cambridge, we shall make as good use of them as they do.'

His Majesty enquired if he was then writing any thing. He answered, he was not, and must now read to acquire more knowledge. The King, as it should seem with a view to urge him to rely on his own stores as an original writer, and to continue his labours, then said, 'I do not think you borrow much from any body.' Johnson said he thought he had already done his part as a writer. 'I should have thought so, too, (said the King) if you had not written so well.'—Johnson observed to me, upon this, that 'No man could have paid a handsomer compliment; and it was fit for a king to pay. It was decisive.' When asked by another friend, at Sir Joshua Reynolds's, whether he made any reply to this high compliment, he answered, 'No, Sir. When the King had said it, it was to be so. It was not for me to bandy civilities with my Sovereign.'

His Majesty having observed to him that he supposed he must have read a great deal, Johnson answered,

that he thought more than he read; that he had read a great deal in the early part of his life, but having fallen into ill health, he had not been able to read much, compared with Dr. Warburton' Upon which the King said, that he heard Dr. Warburton was a man of such general knowledge, that you could scarce talk with him on any subject on which he was not qualified to speak, and that his learning resembled Garrick's acting, in its universality.

His Majesty then talked of the controversy between Warburton and Lowth, which he seemed to have read, and asked Johnson what he thought of it. Johnson answered, 'Warburton has most general, most scholastic learning; Lowth is the more correct scholar. I do not know which of them calls names best' The King was pleased to say he was of the same opinion, adding, 'You do not think, then, Dr. Johnson, that there was much argument in the case.' Johnson said, he did not think there was. 'Why, truly, (said the King) when once it comes to calling names, argument is pretty well at an end.'

The conversation turned on the Philosophical Transactions, when Johnson observed, that they had now a better method of arranging their materials than formerly. 'Aye, (said the King) they are obliged to Dr. Johnson for that;' for his Majesty had heard and remembered the circumstance, which Johnson himself had forgot.

His Majesty expressed a desire to have the literary biography of this country ably executed, and proposed to Dr. Johnson to undertake it. Johnson signified his readiness to comply with his Majesty's wishes.

During the whole interview, Johnson talked to his Majesty with profound respect, but still in his firm manly manner, with a sonorous voice, and never in that

subdued tone which is commonly used at the levée and in the drawing-room. After the King withdrew, Johnson showed himself highly pleased with his Majesty's conversation, and gracious behaviour. He said to Mr. Barnard, 'Sir, they may talk of the King as they will; but he is the finest gentleman I have ever seen.' And he afterwards observed to Mr. Langton, 'Sir, his manners are those of as fine a gentleman as we may suppose Lewis the Fourteenth, or Charles the Second.'

At Sir Joshua's, where a circle of Johnson's friends was collected round him to hear his account of this memorable conversation, Dr. Joseph Warton, in his frank and lively manner, was very active in pressing him to mention the particulars. 'Come now, Sir, this is an interesting matter, do favour us with it.' Johnson, with great good humour, complied.

He told them, 'I found his Majesty wished I should talk, and I made it my business to talk. I find it does a man good to be talked to by his Sovereign. In the first place, a man cannot be in a passion——' Here some question interrupted him, which is to be regretted. During all the time in which Dr. Johnson was employed in relating to the circle at Sir Joshua Reynolds's the particulars of what passed between the King and him, Dr. Goldsmith remained unmoved upon a sofa at some distance, affecting not to join in the least in the eager curiosity of the company. He assigned as a reason for his gloom and seeming inattention, that he apprehended Johnson had relinquished his purpose of furnishing him with a Prologue to his play, with the hopes of which he had been flattered; but it was strongly suspected that he was fretting with chagrin and envy at the singular honour Dr. Johnson had lately enjoyed. At length, the frankness and simplicity of his natural

character prevailed. He sprung from the sofa, advanced to Johnson, and in a kind of flutter, from imagining himself in the situation which he had just been hearing described, exclaimed, 'Well, you acquitted yourself in this conversation better than I should have done; for I should have bowed and stammered through the whole of it.'

12

JOHNSON AT SIXTY

IT APPEARS from his notes of the state of his mind, that he suffered great perturbation and distraction in 1768. Nothing of his writing was given to the public this year, except the Prologue to his friend Goldsmith's comedy of *The Good-natured Man*.

His Majesty having the preceding year instituted the Royal Academy of Arts in London, Johnson had now (1769) the honour of being appointed Professor in Ancient Literature.

I came to London in the autumn; and having informed him that I was going to be married in a few months, I wished to have as much of his conversation as I could before engaging in a state of life which would probably keep me more in Scotland, and prevent me seeing him so often as when I was a single man; but I found he was at Brighthelmstone with Mr. and Mrs. Thrale. After his return to town we met frequently.

I had last year the pleasure of seeing Mrs. Thrale at Dr. Johnson's one morning, and had conversation enough with her to admire her talents, and to show her

that I was as Johnsonian as herself. Dr. Johnson had probably been kind enough to speak well of me, for this evening he delivered me a very polite card from Mr. Thrale and her, inviting me to Streatham.

On the 6th of October I complied with this obliging invitation, and found, at an elegant villa, six miles from town, every circumstance that can make society pleasing. Johnson, though quite at home, was yet looked up to with an awe tempered by affection, and seemed to be equally the care of his host and hostess. I rejoiced at seeing him so happy.

I know not from what spirit of contradiction he burst out into a violent declamation against the Corsicans, of whose heroism I talked in high terms. 'Sir, (said he) what is all this rout about the Corsicans? They have been at war with the Genoese for upwards of twenty years, and have never yet taken their fortified towns. They might have battered down their walls, and reduced them to powder, in twenty years. They might have pulled the walls in pieces, and cracked the stones with their teeth, in twenty years.' It was in vain to argue with him upon the want of artillery: he was not to be resisted for the moment

On the evening of October 10, I presented Dr. Johnson to General Paoli.¹ I had greatly wished that two men, for whom I had the highest esteem, should meet. They met with a manly ease, mutually conscious of their own abilities, and of the abilities of each other. The General spoke Italian, and Dr. Johnson English, and understood one another very well, with a little aid of interpretation from me, in which I compared myself to an isthmus which joins two great continents.

Upon Johnson's approach, the General said, 'From what I have read of your works, Sir, and from what

¹ Corsican patriot, driven into exile.

Mr. Boswell has told me of you, I have long held you in great veneration.'

The General talked of languages being formed on the particular notions and manners of a people, without knowing which, we cannot know the language. We may know the direct significance of single words, but by these no beauty of expression, no sally of genius, no wit is conveyed to the mind. All this must be by allusion to other ideas.

'Sir, (said Johnson) you talk of language, as if you had never done any thing else but study it, instead of governing a nation.'

The General said, '*Questo è un troppo gran complimento,*' this is too great a compliment.

Johnson answered, 'I should have thought so, Sir, if I had not heard you talk.'

Johnson went home with me, and drank tea till late in the night. He said, General Paoli had the loftiest port of any man he had ever seen. He denied that military men were always the best bred men. 'Perfect good breeding,' he observed, 'consists in having no particular mark of any profession, but a general elegance of manners; whereas, in a military man, you can commonly distinguish the *brand* of a soldier, *l'homme d'épée.*'

He honoured me with his company at dinner on the 16th of October, at my lodgings in Old Bond-street.

[Garriek played round him with a fond vivacity, taking hold of the breasts of his coat, and, looking up in his face with a lively archness, complimented him on the good health which he seemed then to enjoy; while the sage, shaking his head, beheld him with a genial complacency

One of the company not being come at the appointed hour, I proposed, as usual upon such occasions, to order

dinner to be served; adding, 'Ought six people to be kept waiting for one?'

'Why, yes, (answered Johnson) if the one will suffer more by your sitting down, than the six will do by waiting.'

Goldsmith, to divert the tedious minutes, strutted about, bragging of his dress, and I believe was seriously vain of it, for his mind was wonderfully prone to such impressions

'Come, come, (said Garrick) talk no more of that You are, perhaps, the worst—eh, eh!'—Goldsmith was eagerly attempting to interrupt him, when Garrick went on, laughing ironically, 'Nay, you will always *look* like a gentleman, but I am talking of being well or *ill drest*.'

'Well, let me tell you, (said Goldsmith) when my tailor brought home my bloom-coloured coat, he said, "Sir, I have a favour to beg of you. When any body asks you who made your clothes, be pleased to mention John Filby, at the Harrow, in Water-lane."'

JOHNSON: 'Why, Sir, that was because he knew the strange colour would attract crowds to gaze at it, and thus they might hear of him, and see how well he could make a coat even of so absurd a colour.'

On the 26th of October, we dined together at the Mitre tavern.

We went home to his house to tea. Mrs. Williams made it with sufficient dexterity, notwithstanding her blindness, though her manner of satisfying herself that the cups were full enough appeared to me a little awkward; for I fancied she put her finger down a certain way, till she felt the tea touch it.¹

¹ I have since had reason to think that I was mistaken; for I have been informed by a lady who was long intimate with her, and likely to be a more accurate observer of such matters,

There was a pretty large circle this evening Dr. Johnson was in very good humour, lively, and ready to talk upon all subjects.] Mr. Ferguson told him of a new-invented machine which went without horses: a man who sat in it turned a handle, which worked a spring that drove it forward. 'Then, Sir, (said Johnson) what is gained is, the man has his choice whether he will move himself alone, or himself and the machine too.'

When we were alone, I introduced the subject of death, and endeavoured to maintain that the fear of it might be got over. I told him that David Hume said to me, he was no more uneasy to think he should *not be* after this life, than that he *had not been* before he began to exist.

JOHNSON: 'Sir, if he really thinks so, his perceptions are disturbed, he is mad: if he does not think so, he lies. He may tell you, he holds his finger in the flame of a candle without feeling pain; would you believe him? When he dies, he at least gives up all he has.'

BOSWELL: 'Foote,¹ Sir, told me, that when he was very ill he was not afraid to die.'

JOHNSON: 'It is not true, Sir. Hold a pistol to Foote's breast, or to Hume's breast, and threaten to kill them, and you'll see how they behave.'

BOSWELL: 'But may we not fortify our minds for the approach of death?'—Here I am sensible I was in the wrong, to bring before his view what he ever looked upon with horror.

[His mind resembled the vast amphitheatre, the Coliseum at Rome. In the centre stood his judgment, that she acquired such a niceness of touch, as to know, by the feeling on the outside of the cup, how near it was to being full.
—Boswell.

¹ Samuel Foote (1720–1777) was a dramatist and comic actor, with a special gift for mimicry.

which, like a mighty gladiator, combated those apprehensions that, like the wild beasts of the *arena*, were all around in cells, ready to be let out upon him. After a conflict, he drives them back into their dens; but not killing them, they were still assailing him

To my question, whether we might not fortify our minds for the approach of death, he answered, in a passion, 'No, Sir, let it alone. It matters not how a man dies, but how he lives. The act of dying is not of importance, it lasts so short a time.' He added, (with an earnest look) 'A man knows it must be so, and submits. It will do him no good to whine.'

I attempted to continue the conversation. He was so provoked, that he said, 'Give us no more of this;' and was thrown into such a state of agitation, that he expressed himself in a way that alarmed and distressed me; showed an impatience that I should leave him, and when I was going away, called to me sternly, 'Don't let us meet tomorrow.'

I went home exceedingly uneasy. All the harsh observations which I had ever heard made upon his character, crowded into my mind; and I seemed to myself like the man who had put his head into the lion's mouth a great many times with perfect safety, but at last had it bit off.

Next morning I sent him a note, stating, that I might have been in the wrong, but it was not intentionally; he was, therefore, I could not help thinking, too severe upon me. That notwithstanding our agreement not to meet that day, I would call on him in my way to the city, and stay five minutes by my watch. You are (said I) in my mind, since last night, surrounded with cloud and storm. Let me have a glimpse of sunshine, and go about my affairs in serenity and cheerfulness.'

Upon entering his study, I was glad that he was not alone, which would have made our meeting most awkward. There were with him, Mr. Steevens and Mr. Tyers, both of whom I now saw for the first time. My note had, on his own reflection, softened him, for he received me very complacently; so that I unexpectedly found myself at ease, and joined in the conversation.

I whispered him, 'Well, Sir, you are now in good humour.'

JOHNSON. 'Yes, Sir'

I was going to leave him, and had got as far as the staircase. He stopped me, and smiling, said, 'Get you gone *in*;' a curious mode of inviting me to stay, which I accordingly did for some time longer.

This little incidental quarrel and reconciliation, which, perhaps, I may be thought to have detailed too minutely, must be esteemed as one of many proofs which his friends had, that though he might be charged with *bad humour* at times, he was always a *good-natured* man; and I have heard Sir Joshua Reynolds, a nice and delicate observer of manners, particularly remark, that when upon any occasion Johnson had been rough to any person in company, he took the first opportunity of reconciliation, by drinking to him, or addressing his discourse to him; but if he found his dignified, indirect overtures sullenly neglected, he was quite indifferent, and considered himself as having done all that he ought to do, and the other as now in the wrong.

TABLE TALK

ON FRIDAY, April 10, 1772, I dined with him at General Oglethorpe's,¹ where we found Dr. Goldsmith.

I started the question whether duelling was consistent with moral duty. The brave old General fired at this, and said, with a lofty air, 'Undoubtedly a man has a right to defend his honour.'

GOLDSMITH: (turning to me) 'I ask you first, Sir, what would you do if you were affronted?'

I answered I should think it necessary to fight.

'Why, then, (replied Goldsmith) that solves the question.'

JOHNSON: 'No, Sir, it does not solve the question. It does not follow that what a man would do is therefore right.'

I said, I wished to have it settled, whether duelling was contrary to the laws of Christianity.

JOHNSON: 'Sir, as men become in a high degree refined, various causes of offence arise; which are considered to be of such importance, that life must be staked to atone for them, though in reality they are not so. A body that has received a very fine polish may be easily hurt. Before men arrive at this artificial refinement, if one tells his neighbour he lies, his neighbour tells him he lies; if one gives his neighbour a blow, his neighbour gives him a blow: but in a state of highly polished society, an affront is held to be a serious injury. It must therefore be resented, or rather a duel must be fought upon it, as men have agreed to banish from their society one who puts up with an

¹ Founder of the state of Georgia.

affront without fighting a duel. Now, Sir, it is never unlawful to fight in self-defence. He, then, who fights a duel, does not fight from passion against his antagonist, but out of self-defence; to avert the stigma of the world, and to prevent himself from being driven out of society. I could wish there was not that superfluity of refinement; but while such notions prevail, no doubt a man may lawfully fight a duel.'

The General told us, that when he was a very young man, I think only fifteen, serving under Prince Eugene of Savoy, he was sitting in a company at table with a Prince of Wirtemberg. The Prince took up a glass of wine, and, by a fillip, made some of it fly in Oglethorpe's face. Here was a nice dilemma. To have challenged him instantly, might have fixed a quarrelsome character upon the young soldier. to have taken no notice of it, might have been considered as cowardice. Oglethorpe, therefore, keeping his eye upon the Prince, and smiling all the time, as if he took what his Highness had done in jest, said '*Mon Prince*,——' (I forget the French words he used; the purport, however, was) 'That's a good joke; but we do it much better in England;' and threw a whole glass of wine in the Prince's face. An old general, who sat by, said, '*Il a bien fait, mon Prince; vous l'avez commencé*.' and thus all ended in good humour.

On April 15, 1772, I supped with Dr. Johnson, at the Crown and Anchor tavern, in the Strand.

I talked of the recent expulsion of six students from the University of Oxford, who were methodists, and would not desist from publicly praying and exhorting.

JOHNSON: 'Sir, that expulsion was extremely just and proper. What have they to do at an university, who are not willing to be taught, but will presume to

teach? Where is religion to be learnt but at an university? Sir, they were examined, and found to be mighty ignorant fellows.'

BOSWELL: 'But, was it not hard, Sir, to expel them, for I am told they were good beings?'

JOHNSON: 'I believe they might be good beings; but they were not fit to be in the University of Oxford. A cow is a very good animal in the field, but we turn her out of a garden.'

In 1773, to my great surprise, he asked me to dine with him on Easter-day. I never supposed that he had a dinner at his house; for I had not then heard of any one of his friends having been entertained at his table. He told me, 'I generally have a meat pie on Sunday: it is baked at a public oven, which is very properly allowed, because one man can attend to it, and thus the advantage is obtained of not keeping servants from church to dress dinners.'

April 11, being Easter-Sunday, after having attended divine service at St. Paul's, I repaired to Dr. Johnson's. I had gratified my curiosity much in dining with JEAN JACQUES ROUSSEAU, while he lived in the wilds of Neuchâtel: I had as great a curiosity to dine with DR. SAMUEL JOHNSON, in the dusky recess of a court in Fleet-street. I supposed we should scarcely have knives and forks, and only some strange, uncouth, ill-drest dish: but I found every thing in very good order. We had no other company but Mrs. Williams, and a young woman whom I did not know. As a dinner here was considered as a singular phenomenon, and as I was frequently interrogated on the subject, my readers may perhaps be desirous to know our bill of fare. Foote, I remember, in allusion to Francis, the *negro*, was willing to suppose that our repast was *black broth*. But the fact was, that we had a very good soup, a

boiled leg of lamb and spinach, a veal pie, and a rice pudding.

I put a question to him upon a fact in common life, which he could not answer, nor have I found any one else who could. What is the reason that women servants, though obliged to be at the expense of purchasing their own clothes, have much lower wages than men servants, to whom a great proportion of that article is furnished, and when in fact our female house-servants work much harder than the male?

He told me that he had twelve or fourteen times attempted to keep a journal of his life, but never could persevere. He advised me to do it. 'The great thing to be recorded (said he) is the state of your own mind: and you should write down every thing that you remember, for you cannot judge at first what is good or bad; and write immediately, while the impression is fresh, for it will not be the same a week afterwards.'

On Tuesday, April 13, he and Dr. Goldsmith and I dined at General Oglethorpe's. Goldsmith expatiated on the common topic, that the race of our people was degenerated, and that this was owing to luxury.

JOHNSON: 'Sir, in the first place, I doubt the fact. I believe there are as many tall men in England now, as ever there were. But, secondly, supposing the stature of our people to be diminished, that is not owing to luxury; for, Sir, consider to how very small a proportion of our people luxury can reach. Our soldiery, surely, are not luxurious, who live on sixpence a day; and the same remark will apply to almost all the other classes. Luxury, so far as it reaches the poor, will do good to the race of people, it will strengthen and multiply them. Sir, no nation was ever hurt by luxury; for, as I said before, it can reach but to a very few. I admit that the great increase of commerce and manufactures

hurts the military spirit of a people, because it produces a competition for something else than martial honours,—a competition for riches. It also hurts the bodies of the people, for you will observe, there is no man who works at any particular trade, but you may know him from his appearance to do so. One part or the other of his body being more used than the rest, he is in some degree deformed: but, Sir, that is not luxury.'

GOLDSMITH: 'Come, you're just going to the same place by another road.'

JOHNSON: 'Nay, Sir, I say that is not *luxury*. Let us take a walk from Charing-cross to White-chapel, through, I suppose, the greatest series of shops in the world, what is there in any of these shops (if you except gin-shops) that can do any human being any harm?'

GOLDSMITH: 'Well, Sir, I'll accept the challenge. The very next shop to Northumberland-house is a pickle-shop.'

JOHNSON: 'Well, Sir; do we not know that a maid can in one afternoon make pickles sufficient to serve a whole family for a year? nay, that five pickle-shops can serve all the kingdom? Besides, Sir, there is no harm done to any body by the making of pickles, or the eating of pickles.'

We drank tea with the ladies; and Goldsmith sang Tony Lumpkin's song in his comedy, *She Stoops to Conquer*, and a very pretty one, to an Irish tune, which he had designed for Miss Hardcastle; but as Mrs. Bulkeley, who played the part, could not sing, it was left out. Dr. Johnson, in his way home, stopped at my lodgings in Piccadilly, and sat with me, drinking tea a second time, till a late hour.

On Friday, April 30, I dined with him at Mr. Beauclerk's, where were Lord Charlemont, Sir Joshua



‘Goldsmith sang Tony Lumpkin’s song’

TABLE TALK

Reynolds, and some more members of the LITERARY CLUB, whom he had obligingly invited to meet me, as I was this evening to be balloted for as candidate for admission into that distinguished society. Johnson had done me the honour to propose me, and Beauclerk was very zealous for me.

The gentlemen went away to their club, and I was left at Beauclerk's till the fate of my election should be announced to me. I sat in a state of anxiety which even the charming conversation of Lady Di Beauclerk could not entirely dissipate.

In a short time I received the agreeable intelligence that I was chosen. I hastened to the place of meeting, and was introduced to such a society as can seldom be found. Mr. Edmund Burke, whom I then saw for the first time, and whose splendid talents had long made me ardently wish for his acquaintance; Dr. Nugent, Mr. Garrick, Dr. Goldsmith, Mr. (afterwards Sir William) Jones, and the company with whom I dined. Upon my entrance, Johnson placed himself behind a chair, on which he leaned as on a desk or pulpit, and with humorous formality gave me a *charge*, pointing out the conduct expected from me as a good member of this club.

On Monday, May 9, I dined with Dr. Johnson at General Paoli's. He was obliged, by indisposition, to leave the company early; he appointed me, however, to meet him in the evening at Mr. Chambers's in the Temple, where he accordingly came.

He grew better, and talked with a noble enthusiasm of keeping up the representation of respectable families. He maintained the dignity and propriety of male succession in opposition to the opinion of one of our friends, who had that day employed Mr. Chambers to draw his will, devising his estate to his three sisters, in

preference to a remote heir male. Johnson called them 'three *dowdies*,' and said, with as high a spirit as the boldest baron in the most perfect days of the feudal system, 'An ancient estate should always go to males. It is mighty foolish to let a stranger have it because he marries your daughter, and takes your name. As for an estate newly acquired by trade, you may give it, if you will, to the dog *Towser*, and let him keep his *own* name.'

I have known him at times exceedingly diverted at what seemed to others a very small sport. He now laughed immoderately, without any reason that we could perceive, at our friend's making his will; called him the *testator*, and added, 'I dare say, he thinks he has done a mighty thing. He won't stay till he gets home to his seat in the country, to produce this wonderful deed. he'll call up the landlord of the first inn on the road, and, after a suitable preface upon mortality and the uncertainty of life, will tell him that he should not delay making his will; "and here, Sir, (will he say) is my will, which I have just made, with the assistance of one of the ablest lawyers in the kingdom;" and he will read it to him (laughing all the time). He believes he has made this will; but he did not make it: you, Chambers, made it for him. I trust you have had more conscience than to make him say, "being of sound understanding;" ha, ha, ha! I hope he has left me a legacy. I'd have his will turned into verse, like a ballad.'

Mr. Chambers did not by any means relish this jocularities, and seemed impatient till he got rid of us. Johnson could not stop his merriment, but continued it all the way till we got without the Temple-gate. He then burst into such a fit of laughter, that he appeared to be almost in a convulsion; and, in order to support himself, laid hold of one of the posts at the side of the

foot pavement, and sent forth peals so loud, that in the silence of the night his voice seemed to resound from Temple-bar to Fleet-ditch.

14

A TOUR TO THE HEBRIDES

DR. JOHNSON had for many years given me hopes that we should go together, and visit the Hebrides. We reckoned there would be some inconveniences and hardships, and perhaps a little danger; but these, we were persuaded, were magnified in the imagination of every body. When I was at Ferney, in 1764, I mentioned our design to Voltaire. He looked at me, as if I had talked of going to the North Pole, and said, 'You do not insist on my accompanying you?'—'No, sir.'—'Then I am very willing you should go.'

Johnson had disappointed my expectations so long, that I began to despair; but, in spring, 1773, he talked of coming to Scotland that year with so much firmness, that I hoped he was at last in earnest. I knew that, if he were once launched from the metropolis, he would go forward very well; and I got our common friends there to assist in setting him afloat.

Luckily Mr. Justice Chambers, who was about to sail for the East Indies, was going to take leave of his relations at Newcastle, and he conducted Dr. Johnson to that town. Mr. Scott, of Oxford, accompanied him from thence to Edinburgh. With such propitious convoys did he proceed to my native city. He travelled in post-chaises, of which the rapid motion was one of his most favourite amusements.

He wore a full suit of plain brown clothes, with twisted hair-buttons of the same colour, a large, bushy, greyish wig, a plain shirt, black worsted stockings, and silver buckles. Upon this tour, when journeying, he wore boots, and a very wide, brown, cloth great-coat, with pockets which might have almost held the two volumes of his folio *Dictionary*; and he carried in his hand a large, English oak stick.

On Saturday, the 14th of August, 1773, late in the evening, I received a note from him, that he was arrived at Boyd's inn, at the head of the Canongate. I went to him directly. He embraced me cordially; and I exulted in the thought that I now had him actually in Caledonia. Mr. Scott told me that, before I came in, the Doctor had unluckily had a bad specimen of Scottish cleanliness. He then drank no fermented liquor. He asked to have his lemonade made sweeter; upon which the waiter, with his greasy fingers, lifted a lump of sugar, and put it into it. The Doctor, in indignation, threw it out of the window. Scott said he was afraid he would have knocked the waiter down.

He was to do me the honour to lodge under my roof. Mr. Johnson and I walked arm-in-arm, up the High Street, to my house in James's-court; it was a dusky night: I could not prevent his being assailed by the evening effluvia of Edinburgh. I heard a late baronet of some distinction observe, that 'walking the streets of Edinburgh at night was pretty perilous, and a good deal odoriferous.'

A zealous Scotsman would have wished Mr. Johnson to be without one of his five senses upon this occasion. As we marched slowly along, he grumbled in my ear, 'I smell you in the dark!'

My wife had tea ready for him, which he delighted to drink at all hours, particularly when sitting up late. He

showed much complacency upon finding that the mistress of the house was so attentive to his singular habit.

We sat till near two in the morning, having chatted a good while after my wife left us. She had insisted, that, to show all respect to the sage, she would give up her own bed-chamber to him, and take a worse.

Mr. Johnson was pleased with my daughter Veronica, then a child about four months old. She had the appearance of listening to him. His motions seemed to her to be intended for her amusement; and when he stopped, she fluttered, and made a little infantine noise, and a kind of signal for him to begin again. She would be held close to him, which was a proof from simple nature, that his figure was not horrid.

Wednesday, Aug. 18.—On this day we set out from Edinburgh.

Dr. Johnson thought it unnecessary to put himself to the additional expense of bringing with him Francis Barber, his faithful black servant; so we were attended only by my man, Joseph Ritter, a Bohemian, a fine stately fellow above six feet high, who had been over a great part of Europe, and spoke many languages. He was the best servant I ever saw.

From an erroneous apprehension of violence, Dr. Johnson had provided a pair of pistols, some gunpowder, and a quantity of bullets; but upon being assured we should run no risk of meeting any robbers, he left his arms and ammunition in an open drawer, of which he gave my wife the charge.

She did not seem quite easy when we left her: but away we went!

[From Edinburgh the travellers made their way north along the east coast of Scotland, spending two nights at St. Andrews, one at Montrose, three at Aberdeen, and one at Slaines Castle as guests of Lord Errol. On August 25 they turned west and slept at Banff. —Editor's Note.]

Thursday, Aug 26 —We got a fresh chaise at Banff, a very good one, and very good horses. We breakfasted at Cullen. They set down dried haddocks broiled, along with our tea. I ate one: but Dr. Johnson was disgusted by the sight of them, so they were removed.

We dined at Elgin, and saw the noble ruins of the cathedral. Though it rained much, Dr. Johnson examined them with the most patient attention. We fared but ill at our inn here; and Dr. Johnson said, this was the first time he had seen a dinner in Scotland that he could not eat.

In the afternoon, we drove over the very heath where Macbeth met the witches, according to tradition. Dr. Johnson again solemnly repeated—

How far is't called to Fores? What are these,
So wither'd, and so wild in their attire?
That look not like the inhabitants o' the earth,
And yet are on't?

He repeated a good deal more of *Macbeth*. His recitation was grand and affecting.

He then parodied the 'All hail' of the witches to Macbeth, addressing himself to me. I had purchased some land called Dalblair; and, as in Scotland it is customary to distinguish landed men by the name of their estates, I had thus two titles, Dalblair and young Auchinleck. So my friend, in imitation of

All hail, Macbeth! hail to thee, Thane of Cawdor!

condescended to amuse himself with uttering

All hail, Dalblair! hail to thee, Lord of Auchinleck!¹

¹ Then, Boswell tells us, pronounced as a dissyllable, *Affleck*, but now, as it is written, *Auchinleck*.



'Hail to thee, Lord of *Auchinleck* !'

A TOUR TO THE HEBRIDES

We got to Fores at night, and found an admirable inn.

Friday, Aug. 27.—We came to Nairn to breakfast. Though a county town and a royal burgh, it is a miserable place. Over the room where we sat, a girl was spinning wool with a great wheel, and singing an Erse song.

After dinner we walked to the old castle of Calder (pronounced Cawder), the Thane of Cawdor's seat.

Saturday, Aug. 28.—We got safely to Inverness, and put up at Mackenzie's inn.

Sunday, Aug. 29.—After church, we walked down to the quay. We then went to Macbeth's castle. I had a romantic satisfaction in seeing Dr. Johnson actually in it. It perfectly corresponds with Shakspeare's description. Just as we came out of it, a raven perched on one of the chimney-pots, and croaked. Then I repeated:

———The raven himself is hoarse,
That croaks the fatal entrance of Duncan
Under my battlements.

Monday, Aug. 30.—We might have taken a chaise to Fort Augustus, but, had we not hired horses at Inverness, we should not have found them afterwards: so we resolved to begin here to ride. We had three horses, for Dr. Johnson, myself, and Joseph, and one which carried our portmanteaus, and two Highlanders who walked along with us, John Hay and Lauchland Vass. Dr. Johnson rode very well.

It was a delightful day. Loch Ness, and the road upon the side of it, shaded with birch trees, and the hills above it, pleased us much.

When we had advanced a good way by the side of Loch Ness, I perceived a little hut, with an old-looking woman at the door of it. I thought here might be a

scene that would amuse Dr. Johnson; so I mentioned it to him. 'Let's go in,' said he. We dismounted, and we and our guides entered the hut. It was a wretched little hovel of earth only, I think, and for a window had only a small hole, which was stopped with a piece of turf, that was taken out occasionally, to let in light. In the middle of the room or space which we entered was a fire of peat, the smoke going out at a hole in the roof. She had a pot upon it, with goat's flesh, boiling. There was at one end under the same roof, but divided by a kind of partition made of wattles, a pen or fold in which we saw a good many kids.

Dr. Johnson was curious to know where she slept. I asked one of the guides, who questioned her in Erse. Dr. Johnson would not hurt her delicacy by insisting on 'seeing her bed-chamber.' But my curiosity was more ardent, I lighted a piece of paper, and went into the place where the bed was. There was a little partition of wicker, rather more neatly done than that for the fold, and close by the wall was a kind of bedstead of wood, with heath upon it by way of bed; at the foot of which I saw some sort of blankets or covering rolled up in a heap. The woman's name was Fraser; so was her husband's. He was a man of eighty. Mr. Fraser, of Balnain, allows him to live in this hut, and keep sixty goats, for taking care of his woods, where he then was. They had five children, the eldest only thirteen. Two were gone to Inverness to buy meal; the rest were looking after the goats. This contented family had four stacks of barley, twenty-four sheaves in each. They had a few fowls. We were informed that they lived all the spring without meal, upon milk and curds and whey alone. What they get for their goats, kids, and fowls, maintains them during the rest of the year.

She asked us to sit down and take a dram. I saw one chair. She said she was as happy as any woman in Scotland. She could hardly speak any English except a few detached words. Dr. Johnson was pleased at seeing, for the first time, such a state of human life. She asked for snuff. It is her luxury, and she uses a great deal. We had none, but gave her sixpence apiece. She then brought out her whisky bottle. I tasted it; as did Joseph and our guides. so I gave her sixpence more. She sent us away with many prayers in Erse.

We dined at a public house called the General's Hut, from General Wade, who was lodged there when he commanded in the north. After dinner we passed through a good deal of mountainous country. It was dark when we arrived at Fort Augustus.

Tuesday, Aug. 31.—Between twelve and one we set out, and travelled eleven miles, through a wild country, till we came to a house in Glenmorison, called Anoch, kept by a M'Queen. Our landlord was a sensible fellow: he had learnt his grammar, and his pride seemed to be much piqued that we were surprised at his having books.

We had tea in the afternoon, and our landlord's daughter, a modest, civil girl, very neatly dressed, made it for us. Dr. Johnson made her a present of a book which he had bought at Inverness.

The room had some deals laid across the joists, as a kind of ceiling. There were two beds in the room, and a woman's gown was hung on a rope to make a curtain of separation between them. Joseph had sheets, which my wife had sent with us, laid on them. We had much hesitation, whether to undress, or lie down with our clothes on. I said at last, 'I'll plunge in! There will be less harbour for vermin about me when I am stripped.' Dr. Johnson said, he was like one hesitating

whether to go into the cold bath. At last he resolved too. I observed he might serve a campaign.

JOHNSON: 'I could do all that can be done by patience: whether I should have strength enough, I know not.'

He was in excellent humour.

After we had offered up our private devotions, and had chatted a little from our beds, Dr. Johnson said, 'Good night.' He fell asleep immediately. I was not so fortunate for a long time. I fancied myself bit by innumerable vermin under the clothes; and that a spider was travelling from the wainscot towards my mouth. At last I fell into insensibility.

Wednesday, Sept. 1.—I awaked very early. I began to imagine that the landlord, being about to emigrate, might murder us to get our money, and lay it upon the soldiers in the barn. Such groundless fears will arise in the mind, before it has resumed its vigour after sleep. Dr. Johnson had had the same kind of ideas; for he told me afterwards that he considered so many soldiers, having seen us, would be witnesses, should any harm be done, and that circumstance, I suppose, he considered as a security. When I got up, I found him asleep in his miserable sty, as I may call it, with a coloured handkerchief tied round his head. With difficulty could I awaken him.

We got away about eight. M'Queen walked some miles to give us a convoy. He had, in 1745, joined the Highland army at Fort Augustus, and continued in it till after the battle of Culloden. As he narrated the particulars of that ill-advised, but brave attempt, I could not refrain from tears. The very Highland names, or the sound of a bagpipe, will stir my blood, and fill me with a mixture of melancholy and respect for courage; with pity for an unfortunate and

superstitious regard for antiquity, and thoughtless inclination for war.

We passed through Glensheal, with prodigious mountains on each side. We saw where the battle was fought, in the year 1719. Dr Johnson owned he was now in a scene of as wild nature as he could see, but he corrected me sometimes in my inaccurate observations. 'There,' said I, 'is a mountain like a cone.'

JOHNSON: 'No, Sir, it would be called so in a book; and when a man comes to look at it, he sees it is not so. It is indeed pointed at the top; but one side of it is larger than the other.'

Another mountain I called immense.

JOHNSON: 'No; it is no more than a considerable protuberance.'

We came to a rich green valley, comparatively speaking, and stopped awhile to let our horses rest and eat grass. We soon afterwards came to Auchnasheal, a kind of rural village, a number of cottages being built together, as we saw all along in the Highlands. We passed many miles this day without seeing a house, but only little summer huts, called shielings. At Auchnasheal, we sat down on a green turf-seat at the end of a house; they brought us out two wooden dishes of milk, which we tasted. One of them was frothed like a syllabub. I saw a woman preparing it with such a stick as is used for chocolate, and in the same manner. We had a considerable circle about us, men, women, and children, all M'Craas, Lord Seaforth's people. Not one of them could speak English. I gave all who chose it snuff and tobacco. I also gave each person a piece of wheat bread, which they had never tasted before. I then gave a penny apiece to each child. I told Dr. Johnson of this: upon which he called to Joseph and our guides, for change for a shilling, and declared that

he would distribute among the children. Upon this being announced in Erse, there was a great stir; not only did some children come running down from neighbouring huts, but I observed one black-haired man, who had been with us all along, had gone off, and returned, bringing a very young child. My fellow-traveller then ordered the children to be drawn up in a row, and he dealt about his copper, and made them and their parents all happy.

There was great diversity in the faces of the circle around us; some were as black and wild in their appearance as any American savages whatever. One woman was as comely almost as the figure of Sappho, as we see it painted. We asked the old woman, the mistress of the house where we had the milk, (which, by the by, Dr. Johnson told me, for I did not observe it myself, was built not of turf, but of stone) what we should pay. She said, what we pleased. One of our guides asked her, in Erse, if a shilling was enough. She said, 'Yes.' But some of the men bade her ask more. This vexed me; because it showed a desire to impose upon strangers, as they knew that even a shilling was high payment. The woman, however, honestly persisted in her first price; so I gave her half a crown.

Dr. Johnson was much refreshed by this repast. He was pleased when I told him he would make a good chief.

We rode on well, till we came to the high mountain called the Rattakin, by which time both Dr. Johnson and the horses were a good deal fatigued.

It grew dusky; and we had a very tedious ride for what was called five miles, but I am sure would measure ten. We had no conversation. I was riding forward to the inn at Glenelg, on the shore opposite to Sky, that I might take proper measures, before Dr. Johnson,

who was now advancing in dreary silence, Hay leading his horse, should arrive. Vass also walked by the side of his horse, and Joseph followed behind. As, therefore, he was thus attended, and seemed to be in deep meditation, I thought there could be no harm in leaving him for a little while. He called me back with a tremendous shout, and was really in a passion with me for leaving him. I told him my intentions, but he was not satisfied, and said, 'Do you know, I should as soon have thought of picking a pocket, as doing so.'

BOSWELL: 'I am diverted with you, Sir.'

JOHNSON: 'Sir, I could never be diverted with incivility. Doing such a thing makes one lose confidence in him who has done it, as one cannot tell what he may do next.'

His extraordinary warmth confounded me so much, that I justified myself but lamely to him; yet my intentions were not improper. I wished to get on, to see how we were to be lodged, and how we were to get a boat, all which I thought I could best settle myself, without his having any trouble. To apply his great mind to minute particulars is wrong: it is like taking an immense balance (such as is kept on quays for weighing cargoes of ships) to weigh a guinea. I knew I had neat little scales, which would do better. I, however, continued to ride by him, finding he wished I should do so.

We came on to the inn at Glenelg. There was no provender for our horses; so they were sent to grass, with a man to watch them. A maid showed us up stairs into a room damp and dirty, with bare walls, a variety of bad smells, a coarse, black, greasy, fir table, and forms of the same kind; and out of a wretched bed started a fellow from his sleep.

Our bad accommodation here made me uneasy and

almost fretful. Dr. Johnson was calm. I said he was so from vanity.

JOHNSON: 'No, Sir, it is from philosophy.'

I resumed the subject of my leaving him on the road, and endeavoured to defend it better. He was still violent upon that head, and said, 'Sir, had you gone on, I was thinking that I should have returned with you to Edinburgh, and then have parted from you, and never spoken to you more.'

I sent for fresh hay, with which we made beds for ourselves, each in a room equally miserable. Like Wolfe, we had '*a choice of difficulties*.' Dr. Johnson made things easier by comparison. At M'Queen's, last night, he observed, that few were so well lodged in a ship. To-night, he said, we were better than if we had been upon the hill. He lay down buttoned up in his great-coat. I had my sheets spread on the hay, and my clothes and great-coat laid over me, by way of blankets.

Thursday, Sept. 2.—I had slept ill. Dr. Johnson's anger had affected me much. I considered that, without any bad intention, I might suddenly forfeit his friendship; and was impatient to see him this morning. I told him how uneasy he had made me by what he had said. He owned, he had spoken to me in passion, that he would not have done what he threatened; and added, 'Let's think no more on't.'

BOSWELL: 'Well, then, Sir, I shall be easy. Remember, I am to have fair warning in case of any quarrel. You are never to spring a mine upon me. It was absurd in me to believe you.'

JOHNSON: 'You deserved about as much, as to believe me from night to morning.'

After breakfast, we got into a boat for Sky. It rained much when we set off, but cleared up as we

advanced. We reached the shore of Armidale before one o'clock. Sir Alexander Macdonald came down to receive us.

Friday, Sept. 3.—This day proving wet, we should have passed our time very uncomfortably, had we not found in the house two chests of books, which we eagerly ransacked.

We were advised by some persons here to visit Rasay, in our way to Dunvegan, the seat of the Laird of Macleod. Being informed that the Rev. Mr. Donald M'Queen was the most intelligent man in Sky, and having been favoured with a letter of introduction to him, by the learned Sir James Foulis, I sent it to him by an express, and requested he would meet us at Rasay; and at the same time enclosed a letter to the Laird of Macleod informing him that we intended in a few days to have the honour of waiting on him at Dunvegan.

Monday, Sept. 6.—We set out, accompanied by Mr. Donald M'Leod as our guide. We rode for some time along the district of Slate, near the shore. The houses in general are made of turf, covered with grass. The country seemed well peopled. We came into the district of Strath, and passed along a wild, moorish tract of land till we arrived at the shore. There we found good verdure, and some curious whin-rocks, or collections of stones, like the ruins of the foundations of old buildings.

About a mile beyond Broadfoot is Corrichatachin, a farm of Sir Alexander Macdonald's, possessed by Mr. M'Kinnon, who received us with a hearty welcome, as did his wife, who was what we call in Scotland a *lady-like* woman.

Tuesday, Sept. 7.—Dr. Johnson was much pleased with his entertainment here. There were many good books in the house.

It was a very wet, stormy day. I employed a part of the forenoon in writing this journal. The rest of it was somewhat dreary, from the gloominess of the weather, and the uncertain state which we were in, as we could not tell but it might clear up every hour.

Wednesday, Sept. 8.—When I waked, the rain was much heavier than yesterday; but the wind had abated. By breakfast, the day was better, and in a little while it was calm and clear. I felt my spirits much elated.

We resolved to set out directly after breakfast. We had about two miles to ride to the sea side, and there we expected to get one of the boats belonging to the fleet of herring-busses then on the coast. But while we were preparing to set out, there arrived a man with the following card from the Rev. Mr. Donald M'Queen:

Mr. M'Queen's compliments to Mr. Boswell, and begs leave to acquaint him that, fearing the want of a proper boat, as much as the rain of yesterday, might have caused a stop, he is now at Skianwden with *Macgillichallum's* carriage, to convey him and Dr. Johnson to Rasay, where they will meet with a most hearty welcome, and where Macleod, being on a visit, now attends their motions.

In a little while arrived Mr. Donald M'Queen himself; a decent minister, an elderly man with his own black hair, courteous, and rather slow of speech, but candid, sensible, and well informed, nay learned. Along with him came, as our pilot, a gentleman whom I had a great desire to see, Mr. Malcolm Macleod, one of the Rasay family, celebrated in the year 1745-6. He was now sixty-two years of age, hale, and well proportioned,—with a manly countenance, tanned by the weather, yet having a ruddiness in his cheeks, over a great part

of which his rough beard extended. His eye was quick and lively, yet his look was not fierce, but he appeared at once firm and good humoured. He wore a pair of brogues; tartan hose which came up only near to his knees, and left them bare; a purple camblet kilt; a black waistcoat; a short, green cloth coat, bound with gold cord, a yellowish, bushy wig, a large, blue bonnet with a gold thread button. I never saw a figure that gave a more perfect representation of a Highland gentleman.

We rode down to the shore; but Malcolm walked with graceful agility.

We got into *Rasay's* carriage, which was a good, strong, open boat, made in Norway. The wind had now risen pretty high, and was against us; but we had four stout rowers, particularly a Macleod, a robust, black-haired fellow, half naked, and bare-headed, something between a wild Indian and an English tar. Dr. Johnson sat high on the stern like a magnificent Triton. Malcolm sung an Erse song, the chorus of which was '*Hatyin foam foam eri,*' with words of his own. The boatmen and Mr. M'Queen chorused, and all went well. At length Malcolm himself took an oar, and rowed vigorously. We sailed along the coast of Scalpa, a rugged island, about four miles in length. After we were out of the shelter of Scalpa, and in the sound between it and Rasay, which extended about a league, the wind made the sea very rough. I did not like it.

JOHNSON: 'This now is the Atlantic. If I should tell, at a tea-table in London, that I have crossed the Atlantic in an open boat, how they'd shudder, and what a fool they'd think me to expose myself to such danger!'

In the confusion and hurry of this boisterous sail, Dr. Johnson's spurs, of which Joseph had charge, were

carried overboard into the sea, and lost. This was the first misfortune that had befallen us. Dr. Johnson was a little angry at first, observing that 'there was something wild in letting a pair of spurs be carried into the sea out of a boat'; but then he remarked 'that, as Janes the naturalist had said upon losing his pocket-book, it was rather an inconvenience than a loss.'

The approach to Rasay was very pleasing. We saw before us a beautiful bay, well defended by a rocky coast; a good family mansion, a fine verdure about it, with a considerable number of trees; and beyond it hills and mountains in gradation of wildness. Our boatmen sung with great spirit Dr. Johnson observed, that naval music was very ancient. As we came near the shore, the singing of our rowers was succeeded by that of reapers, who were busy at work, and who seemed to shout as much as to sing, while they worked with a bounding activity. I perceived a large company coming out from the house. We met them as we walked up. There were *Rasay* himself; his brother, Dr. Macleod; his nephew, the Laird of M'Kinnon, the Laird of Macleod; Colonel Macleod of Talisker, an officer in the Dutch service, a very genteel man, and a faithful branch of the family; Mr. Macleod of Muiravenside, best known by the name of Sandie Macleod; and several other persons. We were welcomed upon the green, and conducted into the house, where we were introduced to Lady Rasay, who was surrounded by a numerous family, consisting of three sons and ten daughters.

It was past six o'clock when we arrived. Some excellent brandy was served round immediately, according to the custom of the Highlands, where a dram is generally taken every day. They call it a *scalch*. On a sideboard was placed for us, who had come

off the sea, a substantial dinner, and a variety of wines. Then we had coffee and tea. I observed in the room several elegantly bound books and other marks of improved life. Soon afterwards a fiddler appeared, and a little ball began. *Rasay* himself danced with as much spirit as any man, and Malcolm bounded like a roe. Sandie Macleod, who has at times an excessive flow of spirits, and had it now, made much jovial noise. Dr. Johnson was so delighted with this scene, that he said, 'I know not how we shall get away.'

Saturday, Sept. 11.—It was a storm of wind and rain, so we could not set out.

Dr. Johnson was now wishing to move. There was not enough of intellectual entertainment for him, after he had satisfied his curiosity, which he did, by asking questions, till he had exhausted the island, and where there was so numerous a company, mostly young people, there was such a flow of familiar talk, so much noise, and so much singing and dancing, that little opportunity was left for his energetic conversation. He seemed sensible of this; for when I told him how happy they were at having him there, he said, 'Yet we have not been able to entertain them much.'

Sunday, Sept. 12.—It was a beautiful day, and although we did not approve of travelling on Sunday, we resolved to set out, as we were in an island from whence one must take occasion as it serves. *Rasay* himself went with us in a large boat, with eight oars, built in his island.

We reached the harbour of Portree, in Sky; which is a large and good one. There was here a tolerable inn. Dr. Johnson and I resolved that we should treat the company, so I played the landlord, or master of the feast, having previously ordered Joseph to pay the bill. When we were about to depart, we found that *Rasay*

had been beforehand with us, and that all was paid, I would fain have contested this matter with him, but seeing him resolved, I declined it.

In the evening Dr. Johnson and I remounted our horses, accompanied by Mr. M'Queen and Dr. Macleod. It rained very hard. We rode what they call six miles to Dr. Macleod's house. On the road Dr. Johnson appeared to be somewhat out of spirits. The doctor accompanied us to Kingsburgh, which is called a mile farther; but the computation of Sky has no connection whatever with real distance.

I was highly pleased to see Dr. Johnson safely arrived at Kingsburgh, and received by the hospitable Mr. Macdonald, who, with a most respectful attention, supported him into the house. *Kingsburgh* was completely the figure of a gallant Highlander,—exhibiting 'the graceful mien and manly looks,' which our popular Scotch song has justly attributed to that character. He had his tartan plaid thrown about him, a large, blue bonnet with a knot of black riband like a cockade, a brown short coat of a kind of duffil, a tartan waistcoat with gold buttons and gold button-holes, a bluish philibeg, and tartan hose. He had jet black hair, tied behind, and was a large, stately man, with a steady, sensible countenance.

There was a comfortable parlour, with a good fire, and a dram went round. By and by supper was served, at which there appeared the lady of the house, the celebrated Miss Flora Macdonald. She is a little woman, of a genteel appearance, and uncommonly mild and well bred. To see Dr. Samuel Johnson, the great champion of the English Tories, salute Miss Flora Macdonald in the isle of Sky, was a striking sight.

Miss Flora Macdonald (for so I shall call her) told

me, she heard upon the main land, as she was returning home about a fortnight before, that Mr. Boswell was coming to Sky, and one Mr. Johnson, a young English *buck*, with him. He was highly entertained with this fancy. He was rather quiescent to-night, and went early to bed. I was in a cordial humour, and promoted a cheerful glass. The punch was excellent. Honest Mr. M'Queen observed that I was in high glee, 'my governor being gone to bed.'

Monday, Sept. 13.—The room where we lay was a celebrated one. Dr. Johnson's bed was the very bed in which the grandson of the unfortunate King James the Second lay, on one of the nights after the failure of his rash attempt in 1745–6, while he was eluding the pursuit of the emissaries of government, which had offered thirty thousand pounds as a reward for apprehending him.

Dr. Johnson had caught a cold a day or two ago, and the rain yesterday having made it worse, he was become very deaf. At breakfast he said, he would have given a good deal rather than not have lain in that bed. I owned he was the lucky man, and observed, that without doubt it had been contrived between Mrs. Macdonald and him. She seemed to acquiesce; adding, 'You know young *bucks* are always favourites of the ladies.' He spoke of Prince Charles being there, and asked Mrs. Macdonald, 'Who was with him? We were told, Madam, in England, there was one Miss Flora Macdonald with him.' She said, 'they were very right'; and perceiving Dr. Johnson's curiosity, though he had delicacy enough not to question her, very obligingly entertained him with a recital of the particulars which she herself knew of that escape.

Kingsburgh conducted us in his boat across one of the lochs, as they call them, or arms of the sea, which

flow in upon all the coasts of Sky, to a mile beyond a place called Grishinish.

During our sail, Dr. Johnson asked about the use of the dirk, with which he imagined the Highlanders cut their meat. He was told, they had a knife and fork besides, to eat with. He asked, how did the women do? and was answered, some of them had a knife and fork too; but in general the men, when they had cut their meat, handed their knives and forks to the women, and they themselves ate with their fingers. The old tutor of Macdonald always ate fish with his fingers, alleging that a knife and fork gave it a bad taste. I took the liberty to observe to Dr. Johnson, that he did so. 'Yes, (said he) but it is because I am short-sighted, and afraid of bones, for which reason I am not fond of eating many kinds of fish, because I must use my fingers.'

As soon as we reached the shore, we took leave of *Kingsburgh*, and mounted our horses. We passed through a wild moor, in many places so soft that we were obliged to walk, which was very fatiguing to Dr. Johnson.

We arrived at Dunvegan late in the afternoon. The great size of the castle, which is partly old and partly new, and is built upon a rock close to the sea, while the land around it presents nothing but wild, moorish, hilly, and craggy appearances, gave a rude magnificence to the scene. Having dismounted, we ascended a flight of steps, which was made by the late Macleod, for the accommodation of persons coming to him by land, there formerly being, for security, no other access to the castle but from the sea; so that visitors who came by the land were under the necessity of getting into a boat, and sailed round to the only place where it could be approached. We were introduced into a stately dining-room, and received by Lady Macleod, mother of

the Laird, who, with his friend *Talisker*, having been detained on the road, did not arrive till some time after us.

After we had dined, we repaired to the drawing-room, where some of the young ladies of the family, with their mother, were at tea. This room had formerly been the bed-chamber of Sir Roderick Macleod, one of the old lairds: and he chose it, because behind it there was a considerable cascade, the sound of which disposed him to sleep. Above his bed was this inscription: 'Sir Rorie Macleod of Dunvegan, Knight. God send good rest !' He was called *Rorie More*, that is, great Rorie, not from his size, but from his spirit.

Wednesday, Sept 15—The gentlemen of the clan went away early in the morning to the harbour of Lochbraccadale, to take leave of some of their friends who were going to America. It was a very wet day. We looked at *Rorie More's* horn, which is a large cow's horn, with the mouth of it ornamented with silver, curiously carved. It holds rather more than a bottle and a half. Every Laird of Macleod, it is said, must, as a proof of his manhood, drink it off full of claret, without laying it down. We also saw his bow, which hardly any man now can bend, and his *glaymore*, which was wielded with both hands, and is of a prodigious size. We saw here some old pieces of iron armour, immensely heavy. The broad-sword used, though called the *glaymore* (i.e. the *great sword*), is much smaller than that used in *Rorie More's* time. There is hardly a target now to be found in the Highlands. After the Disarming Act, they made them serve as covers to their butter-milk barrels; a kind of change, like beating spears into pruning-hooks.

Thursday, Sept. 16.—Last night much care was taken of Dr. Johnson, who was still distressed by his cold.

He had hitherto most strangely slept without a night-cap. Miss Macleod made him a large flannel one, and he was prevailed with to drink a little brandy when he was going to bed.

It was still a storm of wind and rain. Dr. Johnson, however, walked out with Macleod, and saw *Rorie More's* cascade in full perfection.

Monday, Sept. 20.—When I awaked, the storm was higher still. It abated about nine, and the sun shone; but it rained again very soon, and it was not a day for travelling.

Tuesday, Sept. 21.—It was a good morning, so we resolved to set out. Macleod and *Talisker* accompanied us. We got to Ulinish about six o'clock, and found a very good farm-house, of two storeys

Thursday, Sept. 23.—We set out this morning on our way to Talisker, in *Ulinish's* boat, having taken leave of him and his family. Mr. Donald M'Queen still favoured us with his company.

There is a beautiful little island in the Loch of Dunvegan, called *Isa*. Macleod said, he would give it to Dr. Johnson, on condition of his residing on it three months in the year; nay, one month. Dr. Johnson was highly amused with the fancy. I have seen him please himself with little things, even with mere ideas like the present. He talked a great deal of this island, how he would build a house there—how he would fortify it—how he would have cannon—how he would plant—how he would sally out, and *take* the Isle of Muck; and then he laughed with uncommon glee, and could hardly leave off. I have seen him do so at a small matter that struck him, and was a sport to no one else. Macleod encouraged the fancy of Dr. Johnson's becoming owner of an island; told him, that it was the practice in this country to name every man by his lands, and begged

leave to drink to him in that mode: '*Island Isa*, your health!' *Ulinish*, *Talisker*, Mr. M'Queen, and I, all joined in our different manners, while Dr. Johnson bowed to each, with much good humour.

We had good weather and a fine sail this day. The shore was varied with hills, and rocks, and corn-fields, and bushes, which are here dignified with the name of natural *wood*. We landed near the house of Ferneley, a farm possessed by another gentleman of the name of Macleod, who, expecting our arrival, was waiting on the shore, with a horse for Dr. Johnson. The rest of us walked. At dinner, I expressed to Macleod the joy which I had in seeing him on such cordial terms with his clan.

We had a very good ride, for about three miles, to Talisker, where Colonel Macleod introduced us to his lady. We found here Mr. Donald M'Lean, the young Laird of Col. He was a little, lively young man.

Talisker is a better place than one commonly finds in Sky. It is situated in a rich bottom. Before it, is a wide expanse of sea, on each hand of which are immense rocks; and, at some distance in the sea, there are three columnal rocks, rising to sharp points. The billows break with prodigious force and noise on the coast of Talisker. There are here a good many well-grown trees. Talisker is an extensive farm. The possessor of it has, for several generations, been the next heir to *Macleod*, as there has been but one son always in that family. The court before the house is most injudiciously paved with the round bluish-grey pebbles which are found upon the sea-shore; so that you walk as if upon cannon balls driven into the ground.

Friday, Sept. 24.—This was a good day. Dr. Johnson told us, at breakfast, that he rode harder at a

fox chase than anybody. 'The English (said he) are the only nation who ride hard a-hunting. A Frenchman goes out upon a managed horse, and capers in the field, and no more thinks of leaping a hedge than of mounting a breach. Lord Powerscourt laid a wager, in France, that he would ride a great many miles in a certain short time. The French academicians set to work, and calculated that, from the resistance of the air, it was impossible. His lordship, however, performed it.'

Our money being nearly exhausted, we sent a bill for thirty pounds to Lochbraccadale, but our messenger found it very difficult to procure cash for it; at length, however, he got us value from the master of a vessel which was to carry away some emigrants. There is a great scarcity of specie in Sky. The people consume a vast deal of snuff and tobacco, for which they must pay ready money; and pedlars, who come about selling goods, as there is not a shop in the island, carry away the cash. I got one and twenty shillings in silver at Portree, which was thought a wonderful store.

Col, though he had come into Sky with an intention to be at Dunvegan, and pass a considerable time in the island, most politely planned an expedition for us. He proposed we should see the islands of Egg, Muck, *Col*, and Tyr-yi. In all these islands he could show us every thing worth seeing, and in Mull he said he should be as if at home, his father having lands there, and he a farm.

Saturday, Sept. 25.—It was resolved that we should set out, in order to return to Slate, to be in readiness to take a boat whenever there should be a fair wind. Dr. Johnson remained in his chamber writing a letter, and it was long before we could get him into motion.

We took leave of Macleod and *Talisker*, from whom we parted with regret. Young *Col* was now our leader.

Mr. M'Queen was to accompany us half a day more. We stopped at a little hut, where we saw an old woman grinding with the *quern*, the ancient Highland instrument, which it is said was used by the Romans; but which, being very slow in its operation, is almost entirely gone into disuse.

The walls of the cottages in Sky, instead of being one compacted mass of stones, are often formed by two exterior surfaces of stone, filled up with earth in the middle, which makes them very warm. The roof is generally bad. They are thatched, sometimes with straw, sometimes with heath, sometimes with fern. The thatch is secured by ropes of straw, or of heath; and, to fix the ropes, there is a stone tied to the end of each. These stones hang round the bottom of the roof, and make it look like a lady's hair in papers; but I should think that, when there is wind, they would come down, and knock people on the head.

We dined at the inn at Sconser, where I had the pleasure to find a letter from my wife. Here we parted from our learned companion, Mr. Donald M'Queen.

We sent our horses round a point of land, that we might shun some very bad road, and resolved to go forward by sea. It was seven o'clock when we got into our boat. We had many showers, and it soon grew pretty dark. Dr. Johnson sat silent and patient. Our boatmen were rude singers, and seemed so like wild Indians, that a very little imagination was necessary to give one an impression of being upon an American river. We landed at Strolimus, from whence we got a guide to walk before us, for two miles, to Corrichatachin. Not being able to procure a horse for our baggage, I took one portmanteau before me, and Joseph another. We had but a single star to light us on our way. It was about eleven when we arrived. We were most

hospitably received by the master and mistress, who were just going to bed, but, with unaffected ready kindness, made a good fire, and at twelve o'clock at night had supper on the table.

Sunday, Sept. 26.—This was another day of wind and rain; but good cheer and good society helped to beguile the time.

Monday, Sept. 27.—Mr. Donald Macleod, our original guide, who had parted from us at Dunvegan, joined us again to-day. The weather was still so bad that we could not travel.

Tuesday, Sept. 28.—The weather was worse than yesterday. I felt as if imprisoned. Dr. Johnson said it was irksome to be detained thus; yet he seemed to have less uneasiness, or more patience, than I had. What made our situation worse here was, that we had no rooms that we could command; for the good people had no notion that a man could have any occasion but for a mere sleeping place; so, during the day, the bed-chambers were common to all the house. Servants ate in Dr. Johnson's, and mine was a kind of general rendezvous of all under the roof, children and dogs not excepted. As the gentlemen occupied the parlour, the ladies had no place to sit in, during the day, but Dr. Johnson's room. I had always some quiet time for writing in it, before he was up; and, by degrees, I accustomed the ladies to let me sit in it after breakfast, at my journal, without minding me.

Dr. Johnson was this morning for going to see as many islands as we could, not recollecting the uncertainty of the season, which might detain us in one place for many weeks. He said to me, 'I have more the spirit of adventure than you.' For my part, I was anxious to get to Mull, from whence we might almost any day reach the main land.

Happily the weather cleared up between one and two o'clock, and we got ready to depart, but our kind host and hostess would not let us go without taking a *snatch*, as they called it, which was in truth a very good dinner.

We set out about four Young *Corrichatachan* went with us. We had a fine evening, and arrived in good time at Ostig, the residence of Mr. Martin M'Pherson, minister of Slate.

Wednesday, Sept. 29.—After a very good sleep, I rose more refreshed than I had been for some nights. We were now at but a little distance from the shore, and saw the sea from our windows, which made our voyage seem nearer.

Thursday, Sept. 30.—There was as great a storm of wind and rain as I have almost ever seen, which necessarily confined us to the house.

Friday, Oct. 1.—The weather being now somewhat better, Mr. James M'Donald, factor to Sir Alexander M'Donald, in Slate, insisted that all the company at Ostig should go to the house at Armidale, which Sir Alexander had left, having gone with his lady to Edinburgh, and be his guests, till we had an opportunity of sailing to Mull. We accordingly got there to dinner; and passed our day very cheerfully, being no less than fourteen in number.

Saturday, Oct. 2.—We were very social and merry in Dr. Johnson's room this forenoon. In the evening the company danced as usual. We performed, with much activity, a dance which, I suppose, the emigration from Sky has occasioned. They call it *America*. Each of the couples, after the common *involution*s and *evolution*s, successively whirls round in a circle, till all are in motion; and the dance seems intended to show how emigration catches, till a whole neighbourhood is set afloat.

A TOUR TO THE HEBRIDES

We danced to-night to the music of the bagpipe, which made us beat the ground with prodigious force. I thought it better to endeavour to conciliate the kindness of the people of Sky, by joining heartily in their amusements, than to play the abstract scholar. I looked on this tour to the Hebrides as a co-partnership between Dr. Johnson and me. Each was to do all he could to promote its success; and I have some reason to flatter myself, that my gayer exertions were of service to us.

Sunday, Oct. 3.—Joseph reported that the wind was still against us.

While we were chatting in the indolent style of men who were to stay here all this day at least, we were suddenly roused at being told that the wind was fair, that a little fleet of herring-busses were passing by for Mull, and that Mr. Simpson's vessel was about to sail. Hugh M'Donald, the skipper, came to us, and was impatient that we should get ready, which we soon did. Dr. Johnson rode, and I and the other gentlemen walked, about an English mile to the shore, where the vessel lay. We were carried to the vessel in a small boat which she had, and we set sail very briskly about one o'clock.

I was much pleased with the motion for many hours. Dr. Johnson grew sick, and retired under cover, as it rained a good deal. I kept above, that I might have fresh air, and finding myself not affected by the motion of the vessel, I exulted in being a stout seaman, while Dr. Johnson was quite in a state of annihilation. But I was soon humbled; for after imagining that I could go with ease to America or the East Indies, I became very sick, but kept above board, though it rained hard. —

As we had been detained so long in Sky by bad



'We danced to-night to the music of the bagpipe'

weather, we gave up the scheme that *Col* had planned for us of visiting several islands, and contented ourselves with the prospect of seeing Mull, and Icolmkill and Inchkenneth, which lie near to it.

Mr. Simpson was sanguine in his hopes for awhile, the wind being fair for us. He said he would land us at Icolmkill that night. But when the wind failed, it was resolved we should make for the Sound of Mull, and land in the harbour of Tobermorie. We kept near the five herring vessels for some time; but afterwards four of them got before us, and one little wherry fell behind us. When we got in full view of the point of Ardnamurchan, the wind changed, and was directly against our getting into the Sound. We were then obliged to tack, and get forward in that tedious manner.

As we advanced, the storm grew greater, and the sea very rough. *Col* then began to talk of making for Egg, or Canna, or his own island. Our skipper said, he would get us into the Sound. Having struggled for this a good while in vain, he said he would push forward till we were near the land of Mull, where we might cast anchor, and lie till the morning; for although, before this, there had been a good moon, and I had pretty distinctly seen not only the land of Mull, but up the Sound, and the country of Morven as at one end of it, the night was now grown very dark. Our crew consisted of M'Donald, our skipper, and two sailors, one of whom had but one eye; Mr. Simpson, himself, *Col*, and M'Donald his servant, all helped. Simpson said, he would willingly go for *Col*, if young *Col* or his servant would undertake to pilot us to a harbour; but, as the island is low land, it was dangerous to run upon it in the dark. *Col* and his servant appeared a little dubious. The scheme of running for Canna seemed then

to be embraced; but Canna was ten leagues off, all out of our way; and they were afraid to attempt the harbour of Egg. All these different plans were successively in agitation. The old skipper still tried to make for the land of Mull; but then it was considered that there was no place there where we could anchor in safety. Much time was lost in striving against the storm.

At last it became so rough, and threatened to be so much worse, that *Col* and his servant took more courage, and said they would undertake to hit one of the harbours in Col. 'Then let us run for it in God's name,' said the skipper; and instantly we turned towards it. The little wherry which had fallen behind us had hard work. The master begged that, if we made for Col, we should put out a light to him. Accordingly, one of the sailors waved a glowing peat for some time. The various difficulties that were started gave me a good deal of apprehension, from which I was relieved, when I found we were to run for a harbour before the wind.

But my relief was but of short duration; for I soon heard that our sails were very bad, and were in danger of being torn in pieces, in which case we should be driven upon the rocky shore of Col. It was very dark, and there was a heavy and incessant rain. The sparks of the burning peat flew so much about, that I dreaded the vessel might take fire. Then, as *Col* was a sportsman, and had powder on board, I figured that we might be blown up. Simpson and he appeared a little frightened, which made me more so, and the perpetual talking, or rather shouting, which was carried on in Erse, alarmed me still more. A man is always suspicious of what is saying in an unknown tongue; and, if fear be his passion at the time, he grows more afraid.

A TOUR TO THE HEBRIDES

Our vessel often lay so much on one side, that I trembled lest she should be overset; and indeed they told me afterwards, that they had run her sometimes to within an inch of the water, so anxious were they to make what haste they could before the night should be worse.

I now saw what I never saw before, a prodigious sea, with immense billows, coming upon a vessel, so as that it seemed hardly possible to escape. There was something grandly horrible in the sight. I am glad I have seen it once. Amidst all these terrifying circumstances, I endeavoured to compose my mind. It was not easy to do it; for all the stories that I had heard of the dangerous sailing among the Hebrides, which is proverbial, came full upon my recollection. When I thought of those who were dearest to me, and would suffer severely, should I be lost, I upbraided myself, as not having a sufficient cause for putting myself in such danger.

It was half an hour after eleven before we set ourselves in the course for Col. As I saw them all busy doing something, I asked *Col*, with much earnestness, what I could do. He, with a happy readiness, put into my hand a rope, which was fixed to the top of one of the masts, and told me to hold it till he bade me pull. If I had considered the matter, I might have seen that this could not be of the least service; but his object was to keep me out of the way of those who were busy working the vessel, and at the same time to divert my fear, by employing me, and making me think that I was of use. Thus did I stand firm to my post, while the wind and rain beat upon me, always expecting a call to pull my rope.

The man with one eye steered, old M'Donald, and *Col* and his servant, lay upon the forecastle, looking

sharp out for the harbour. It was necessary to carry much *cloth*, as they termed it, that is to say, much sail, in order to keep the vessel off the shore of Col. This made violent plunging in a rough sea. At last they spied the harbour of Lochiern, and *Col* cried, 'Thank God, we are safe !'¹ We ran up till we were opposite to it, and soon afterwards we got into it, and cast anchor.

Dr. Johnson had all this time been quiet and unconcerned. He had lain down on one of the beds, and having got free from sickness, was satisfied. There was in the harbour, before us, a Campbell-town vessel, the *Betty*, Kenneth Morison master, taking in kelp, and bound for Ireland. We sent our boat to beg beds for two gentlemen, and that the master would send his boat, which was larger than ours. He accordingly did so, and *Col* and I were accommodated in his vessel till the morning.

Monday, Oct. 4.—About eight o'clock we went in the boat to Mr. Simpson's vessel, and took in Dr. Johnson. He was quite well, though he had tasted nothing but a dish of tea since Saturday night. On our expressing some surprise at this, he said, that 'when he lodged in the Temple, and had no regular system of life, he had fasted for two days at a time, during which he had gone about visiting, though not at the hours of dinner or supper; that he had drunk tea, but eaten no bread;

¹ Their risk, in a sea full of islands, was very considerable. Indeed, the whole expedition was highly perilous, considering the season of the year, the precarious chance of getting seaworthy boats, and the ignorance of the Hebrideans, who, notwithstanding the opportunities, I may say the *necessities*, of their situation, are very careless and unskilful sailors. The time for the Hebrides was too late by a month or six weeks. I have heard those who remembered their tour express surprise they were not drowned.—*Walter Scott*.

that this was no intentional fasting, but happened just in the course of a literary life.'

There was a little miserable public-house close upon the shore, to which we should have gone, had we landed last night: but this morning *Col* resolved to take us directly to the house of Captain Lauchlan M'Lean, a descendant of his family, who had acquired a fortune in the East Indies, and taken a farm in Col. We had about an English mile to go to it. *Col* and Joseph, and some others, ran to some little horses, called here *shelties*, that were running wild on a heath, and caught one of them. We had a saddle with us, which was clapped upon it, and a straw halter was put on its head. Dr. Johnson was then mounted, and Joseph very slowly and gravely led the horse. I said to Dr. Johnson, 'I wish, Sir, *THE CLUB* saw you in this attitude.'

It was a very heavy rain, and I was wet to the skin. Captain M'Lean had but a poor temporary house, or rather hut; however, it was a very good haven to us. There was a blazing peat fire, and Mrs. M'Lean, daughter of the minister of the parish, got us tea.

The day passed away pleasantly enough. The wind became fair for Mull in the evening, and Mr. Simpson resolved to sail next morning: but having been thrown into the island of Col, we were unwilling to leave it unexamined, especially as we considered that the Campbell-town vessel would sail for Mull in a day or two; and therefore we determined to stay.

Tuesday, Oct. 5.—After breakfast, Dr. Johnson and I, and Joseph, mounted horses, and *Col* and the captain walked with us about a short mile across the island. We paid a visit to the Rev. Mr. Hector M'Lean. His parish consists of the islands of Col and Tyr-yi. He was about seventy-seven years of age, a decent ecclesiastic, dressed in a full suit of black clothes, and

a black wig. We were told that he had a valuable library, though but poor accommodation for it, being obliged to keep his books in large chests. It was curious to see him and Dr. Johnson together. Neither of them heard very distinctly, so each of them talked in his own way, and at the same time.

We rode to the northern part of the island, where we saw the ruins of a church or chapel. At Grissipol we found a good farm-house, belonging to the Laird of Col. We were entertained here with a primitive heartiness. Whiskey was served round in a shell, according to the ancient Highland custom. Dr. Johnson would not partake of it, but being desirous to do honour to the modes 'of other times,' drank some water out of the shell.

We set out after dinner for Breacacha, the family seat of the Laird of Col. We found here a neat, new-built gentleman's house, better than any we had been in since we were at Lord Errol's.

Wednesday, Oct. 6—We went and viewed the old castle of Col, which is not far from the present house, near the shore, and founded on a rock.

Thursday, Oct. 7.—There came on a dreadful storm of wind and rain, which continued all day, and rather increased at night. The wind was directly against our getting to Mull.

Friday, Oct. 8.—Dr. Johnson appeared to-day very weary of our present confined situation. He said, 'I want to be on the main land, and go on with existence. This is a waste of life.'

Saturday, Oct. 9—As, in our present confinement, anything that had even the name of curious was an object of attention, I proposed that Col should show me a great stone, mentioned as having been thrown by a giant to the top of a mountain. Dr. Johnson,

who did not like to be left alone, said he would accompany us as far as riding was practicable.

We ascended a part of the hill on horseback, and Col and I scrambled up the rest. A servant held our horses, and Dr. Johnson placed himself on the ground, with his back against a large fragment of rock. The wind being high, he let down the cocks of his hat, and tied it with his handkerchief under his chin. While we were employed in examining the stone, which did not repay our trouble in getting to it, he amused himself with reading 'Gataker on Lots and on the Christian Watch,' a very learned book, of the last age, which had been found in the garret of Col's house, and which he said was a treasure here. When we descended him from above, he had a most eremitical appearance; and on our return told us, he had been so much engaged by Gataker, that he had never missed us. His avidity for variety of books, while we were in Col, was frequently expressed; and he often complained that so few were within his reach.

In our way we came to a strand of some extent, where we were glad to take a gallop, in which my learned friend joined with great alacrity. Dr Johnson, mounted on a large bay mare without shoes, and followed by a foal, which had some difficulty in keeping up with him, was a singular spectacle.

Sunday, Oct. 10.—There was this day the most terrible storm of wind and rain that I ever remember. It made such an awful impression on us all, as to produce, for some time, a kind of dismal quietness in the house. The day was passed without much conversation.

Monday, Oct. 11.—We had some days ago engaged the Campbell-town vessel to carry us to Mull, from the harbour where she lay. The morning was fine, and the

wind fair and moderate; so we hoped at length to get away.

We set out about eleven for the harbour, but, before we reached it, so violent a storm came on, that we were obliged again to take shelter in the house of Captain M'Lean, where we dined, and passed the night.

Tuesday, Oct. 12.—After breakfast, we made a second attempt to get to the harbour; but another storm soon convinced us that it would be in vain. We resolved to go to Mr. M'Sweyn's, where we arrived very wet, fatigued, and hungry. In this situation, we were somewhat disconcerted by being told that we should have no dinner till late in the evening; but should have tea in the meantime. Dr. Johnson opposed this arrangement; but they persisted, and he took the tea very readily. He said to me afterwards, 'You must consider, Sir, a dinner here is a matter of great consequence. It is a thing to be first planned, and then executed. I suppose the mutton was brought some miles off, from some place where they knew there was a sheep killed.'

We had at last a good dinner, or rather supper, and were very well satisfied with our entertainment.

Wednesday, Oct. 13.—Col called me up, with intelligence that it was a good day for a passage to Mull; and just as we rose, a sailor from the vessel arrived for us. We got all ready with despatch.

Before we reached the harbour, the wind grew high again. However, the small boat was waiting, and took us on board. We remained for some time in uncertainty what to do; at last it was determined, that, as a good part of the day was over, and it was dangerous to be at sea at night, in such a vessel and such weather, we should not sail till the morning tide, when the wind

would probably be more gentle. We resolved not to go ashore again, but lie here in readiness. Dr. Johnson and I had each a bed in the cabin. *Col* sat at the fire in the forecastle, with the captain, and Joseph, and the rest. I ate some dry oatmeal, of which I found a barrel in the cabin. I had not done this since I was a boy.

Thursday, Oct. 14.—When Dr Johnson awaked this morning, he called '*Lanky!*' having, I suppose, been thinking of Langton, but corrected himself instantly, and cried '*Bozzy!*'

Between six and seven we hauled our anchor, and set sail with a fair breeze, and, after a pleasant voyage, we got safely and agreeably into the harbour of Tobermorie, before the wind rose, which it always has done, for some days, about noon.

We had here a tolerable inn. Dr. Johnson had owned to me this morning, that he was out of humour. Indeed, he showed it a good deal in the ship; for when I was expressing my joy on the prospect of our landing in Mull, he said, he had no joy, when he recollected that it would be five days before he should get to the main land. I was afraid he would now take a sudden resolution to give up seeing Icolmkill. A dish of tea, and some good bread and butter, did him service, and his bad humour went off. I told him, that I was diverted to hear all the people whom we had visited in our tour say, '*Honest man!*' he's pleased with everything, he's always content!' 'Little do they know,' said I. He laughed, and said, 'You rogue!'

We sent to hire horses to carry us across the island of Mull to the shore opposite to Inchkenneth, the residence of Sir Allan M'Lean, uncle to young *Col*, and chief of the M'Leans, to whose house we intended to go the

next day. Our friend *Col* went to visit his aunt, who lives about a mile from Tobermorie.

Dr. Johnson and I sat by ourselves at the inn and talked a good deal.

Col returned from his aunt, and told us, she insisted that we should come to her house that night. He introduced to us Mr. Campbell, the Duke of Argyle's factor in Tyr-yi. He was going to Inverary, and promised to put letters into the post-office for us. I now found that Dr. Johnson's desire to get on the main land arose from his anxiety to have an opportunity of conveying letters to his friends.

After dinner, we proceeded to Dr M'Lean's, which was about a mile from our inn. He was not at home, but we were received by his lady and daughter, who entertained us so well, that Dr. Johnson seemed quite happy. When we had supped, he asked me to give him some paper to write letters.

Friday, Oct. 15.—We this morning found that we could not proceed, there being a violent storm of wind and rain, and the rivers being impassable. When I expressed my discontent at our confinement, Dr. Johnson said, 'Now that I have had an opportunity of writing to the main land, I am in no such haste.' I was amused with his being so easily satisfied, for the truth was, that the gentleman who was to convey our letters, as I was now informed, was not to set out for Inverary for some time, so that it was probable we should be there as soon as he: however, I did not undeceive my friend, but suffered him to enjoy his fancy,

We had the music of the bagpipe every day, at Armidale, Dunvegan, and Col. Dr. Johnson appeared fond of it, and used often to stand for some time with his ear close to the great drone.

Saturday, Oct. 16.—This day there was a new moon, and the weather changed for the better. We set out, mounted on little Mull horses. Mull corresponded exactly with the idea which I had always had of it; a hilly country, diversified with heath and grass, and many rivulets. Dr. Johnson was not in very good humour. He said, it was a dreary country, much worse than Sky. I differed from him. ‘Oh, Sir! (said he) a most dolorous country!’

We had a very hard journey to-day. I had no bridle for my sheltie, but only a halter; and Joseph rode without a saddle. At one place, a loch having swelled over the road, we were obliged to plunge through pretty deep water. Dr. Johnson observed, how helpless a man would be, were he travelling here alone, and should meet with any accident; and said, ‘he longed to get to a *country of saddles and bridles.*’ He was more out of humour to-day than he has been in the course of our tour, being fretted to find that his little horse could scarcely support his weight, and having suffered a loss, which, though small in itself, was of some consequence to him, while travelling the rugged steepes of Mull, where he was at times obliged to walk.

The loss that I allude to was that of the large oak-stick, which, as I formerly mentioned, he had brought with him from London. It was of great use to him in our wild peregrinations; for, ever since his last illness in 1766, he has had a weakness in his knees, and has not been able to walk easily. It had, too, the properties of a measure, for one nail was driven into it at the length of a foot, another at that of a yard. In return for the services it had done him, he said, this morning, he would make a present of it to some museum; but he little thought he was so soon to lose it. As he preferred riding with a switch, it was intrusted to a fellow, to be

delivered to our baggage-man, who followed us at some distance, but we never saw it more. I could not persuade him out of a suspicion that it had been stolen. 'No, no, my friend, (said he) it is not to be expected that any man in Mull, who has got it, will part with it. Consider, Sir, the value of such a *piece of timber* here !'

We were in hopes to get to Sir Allan Maclean's at Inchkenneth, to-night; but the eight miles of which our road was *said* to consist, were so very long, that we did not reach the opposite coast of Mull till seven at night, though we had set out about eleven in the forenoon; and when we did arrive there, we found the wind strong against us. *Col* determined that we should pass the night at M'Quarrie's, in the island of Ulva, which lies between Mull and Inchkenneth; and a servant was sent forward to the ferry, to secure the boat for us: but the boat was gone to the Ulva side, and the wind was so high that the people could not hear him call, and the night so dark that they could not see a signal. We should have been in a very bad situation, had there not fortunately been lying in the little sound of Ulva an Irish vessel, the *Bonnetta*, of Londonderry, Captain M'Lure, master. He himself was at M'Quarrie's; but his men obligingly came with their long-boat, and ferried us over.

M'Quarrie's house was mean; but we were agreeably surprised with the appearance of the master, whom we found to be intelligent, polite, and much a man of the world.

Sunday, Oct. 17.—Being informed that there was nothing worthy of observation in Ulva, we took boat, and proceeded to Inchkenneth, where we were introduced by our friend *Col* to Sir Allan M'Lean, the chief of his clan, and to two young ladies, his daughters.

Inchkenneth is a pretty little island, a mile long, and about a mile broad, all good land.

As we walked up from the shore, Dr Johnson's heart was cheered by the sight of a road marked with cart-wheels, as on the main land; a thing which we had not seen for a long time. It gave us a pleasure similar to that which a traveller feels, when, whilst wandering on what he fears is a desert island, he perceives the print of human feet.

Dr. Johnson here showed so much of the spirit of a Highlander, that he won Sir Allan's heart: indeed, he has shown it during the whole of our tour. One night, in Col, he strutted about the room with a broad sword and target, and made a formidable appearance; and, another night, I took the liberty to put a large, blue bonnet on his head. His age, his size, and his bushy, grey wig, with this covering on it, presented the image of a venerable *Senachi*.

Monday, Oct. 18.—We agreed to pass the day with Sir Allan, and he engaged to have every thing in order for our voyage to-morrow.

Being now soon to be separated from our amiable friend young *Col*, his merits were all remembered. At Ulva, he had appeared in a new character, having given us a good prescription for a cold. On my mentioning him with warmth, Dr. Johnson said, '*Col* does everything for us: we will erect a statue to *Col*.'

Tuesday, Oct. 19.—After breakfast we took leave of the young ladies, and of our excellent companion *Col*, to whom we had been so much obliged. He had now put us under the care of his chief, and was to hasten back to Sky. We parted from him with very strong feelings of kindness and gratitude, and we hoped to have had some future opportunity of proving to him the sincerity of what we felt; but in the following year he was

unfortunately lost in the Sound between Ulva and Mull.¹

Sir Allan, who obligingly undertook to accompany us to Icolmkill, had a strong, good boat, with four stout rowers. We coasted along Mull till we reached *Gribon*, where is what is called Mackinnon's cave. It is in a rock of great height, close to the sea. Upon the left of its entrance there is a cascade, almost perpendicular from the top to the bottom of the rock.

The height to this cave I cannot tell with any tolerable exactness; but it seemed to be very lofty, and to be a pretty regular arch. We penetrated by candle-light, a great way; by our measurement, no less than four hundred and eighty-five feet. Tradition says, that a piper and twelve men once advanced into this cave, nobody can tell how far, and never returned. At the distance to which we proceeded the air was quite pure; for the candle burned freely, without the least appearance of the flame growing globular, but as we had only one, we thought it dangerous to venture farther, lest, should it have been extinguished, we should have had no means of ascertaining whether we could remain without danger. Dr. Johnson said, this was the greatest natural curiosity he had ever seen.

We saw the island of Staffa, at no very great distance, but could not land upon it: the surge was so high on its rocky coast.

Sir Allan, anxious for the honour of Mull, was still talking of its *woods*, and pointing them out to Dr. Johnson, as appearing at a distance on the skirts of that island, as we sailed along.

JOHNSON: 'Sir, I saw at Tobermorie what they called a wood, which I unluckily took for *heath*. If you show

¹ Just opposite to M'Quarrie's house the boat was swamped by the intoxication of the sailors, who had partaken too largely of M'Quarrie's wonted hospitality.—*Walter Scott*.

me what I shall take for *furze*, it will be something '

In the afternoon we went ashore on the coast of Mull, and partook of a cold repast, which we carried with us.

After a tedious sail, which, by our following various turnings of the coast of Mull, was extended to about forty miles, it gave us no small pleasure to perceive a light in the village of Icolmkill, in which almost all the inhabitants of the island live, close to where the ancient building stood. As we approached the shore, the tower of the cathedral, just discernible in the air, was a picturesque object.

When we had landed upon the sacred place, which, as long as I can remember, I had thought on with veneration, Dr. Johnson and I cordially embraced. We had long talked of visiting Icolmkill; and, from the lateness of the season, were at times very doubtful whether we should be able to effect our purpose. To have seen it, even alone, would have given me great satisfaction; but the venerable scene was rendered much more pleasing by the company of my great and pious friend, who was no less affected by it than I was; and who has described the impressions it should make on the mind, with such strength of thought, and energy of language, that I shall quote his words:

We were now treading that illustrious island, which was once the luminary of the Caledonian regions, whence savage clans and roving barbarians derived the benefits of knowledge, and the blessings of religion. "To abstract the mind from all local emotion would be impossible if it were endeavoured, and would be foolish if it were possible. Whatever withdraws us from the power of our senses, whatever makes the past, the distant, or the future, predominate over the present, advances us in the dignity of thinking beings. Far from me, and from my friends, be such frigid philosophy as may conduct us indifferent and unmoved over any ground which has been dignified by wisdom, bravery, or virtue. That man is little to be envied, whose patriotism would not gain force upon the plain of *Marathon*, or whose piety would not grow warmer among the ruins of *Iona* !

We were accommodated this night in a large barn the island affording no lodging that we should have liked so well. Some good hay was strewed at one end of it, to form a bed for us, upon which we lay with our clothes on; and we were furnished with blankets from the village. Each of us had a portmanteau for a pillow.

Wednesday, Oct. 20.—Early in the morning we surveyed the remains of antiquity at this place.

We set sail again about mid-day, and in the evening landed on Mull, near the house of the Rev. Mr. Neil Macleod, who came out to meet us. We were this night very agreeably entertained at his house.

Thursday, Oct. 21.—Sir Allan M'Lean bragged, that Scotland had the advantage of England by its having more water.

JOHNSON: 'Sir, we would not have your water, to take the vile bogs which produce it. You have too much! A man who is drowned has more water than either of us',—and then he laughed.

Pursuing his victory over Sir Allan, he proceeded: 'Your country consists of two things: stone and water. There is, indeed, a little earth above the stone in some places, but a very little; and the stone is always appearing. It is like a man in rags—the naked skin is still peeping out.'

He took leave of Mr. Macleod, saying, 'Sir, I thank you for your entertainment, and your conversation.'

Mr. Campbell very obligingly furnished us with horses to proceed on our journey to Mr. M'Lean's of Lochbuy, where we were to pass the night. We dined at the house of another physician at Mull, who was so much struck with the uncommon conversation of Dr. Johnson, that he observed to me, 'This man is just a *hogshead* of sense.'

A TOUR TO THE HEBRIDES

After a very tedious ride, through what appeared to me the most gloomy and desolate country I had ever beheld, we arrived, between seven and eight o'clock, at Moy, the seat of the Laird of Lochbuy. He proved to be a bluff, comely, noisy old gentleman, proud of his hereditary consequence, and a very hearty and hospitable landlord. Being told that Dr. Johnson did not hear well, *Lochbuy* bawled out to him, 'Are you of the Johnstons of Glencro, or of Ardnamurchan?' Dr. Johnson gave him a significant look, but made no answer, and I told *Lochbuy* that he was not *Johnston*, but *Johnson*, and that he was an Englishman.

Friday, Oct 22.—Before Dr Johnson came to breakfast, Lady *Lochbuy* said, 'he was a *dungeon* of wit'; a very common phrase in Scotland to express a profoundness of intellect.

After breakfast, we set out for the ferry, by which we were to cross to the main land of Argyleshire. We bade adieu to *Lochbuy*, and to Sir Allan M'Lean, on the shore of Mull, and then got into the ferry-boat, the bottom of which was strewed with branches of trees or bushes, upon which we sat. We had a good day and a fine passage, and in the evening landed at Oban, where we found a tolerable inn. After having been so long confined at different times in islands, from which it was always uncertain when we could get away, it was comfortable to be now on the main land, and to know that, if in health, we might get to any place in Scotland or England in a certain number of days.

[*Stopping at Inverary, Rosedow, and Cameron, Boswell and Johnson reached Glasgow on Oct. 28, and on Nov. 2 came to Auchinleck, in Ayrshire, the seat of Lord Auchinleck, Boswell's father. Here they stayed for a week, returning to Edinburgh on Nov. 9, after an absence of eighty-three days. A fortnight later, Johnson had set out for London by coach.*—Editor's Note.]



'Letting the wax drop upon the carpet'

‘TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

‘DEAR SIR,—I came home last night, without any incommmodity, danger, or weariness, and am ready to begin a new journey. I shall go to Oxford on Monday. I know Mrs. Boswell wished me well to go; her wishes have not been disappointed. . . .

‘Make my compliments to all those to whom my compliments may be welcome. . . .

‘I am, Sir, yours affectionately,

‘SAM. JOHNSON.’

‘Nov. 27, 1773.’

In this letter he shewed a very acute penetration. My wife paid him the most assiduous and respectful attention, while he was our guest; so that I wonder how he discovered her wishing for his departure. The truth is, that his irregular hours and uncouth habits, such as turning the candles with their heads downwards, when they did not burn bright enough, and letting the wax drop upon the carpet, could not but be disagreeable to a lady. Besides, she had not that high admiration of him which was felt by most of those who knew him, and what was very natural to a female mind, she thought he had too much influence over her husband. She once, in a little warmth, made, with more point than justice, this remark upon that subject: ‘I have seen many a bear led by a man; but I never before saw a man led by a bear.’

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THE LOSS OF A MOTHER

‘TO MR. JAMES ELPHINSTON.

September 25, 1750.

‘DEAR SIR,—You have, as I find by every kind of evidence, lost an excellent mother, and I hope you will not think me incapable of partaking of your grief. I have a mother, now eighty-two years of age, whom, therefore, I must soon lose, unless it please GOD that she rather should mourn for me. I read the letters in which you relate your mother’s death to Mrs. Strahan, and think I do myself honour, when I tell you that I read them with tears, but tears are neither to *you* nor to *me* of any further use, when once the tribute of nature has been paid. The business of life summons us away from useless grief, and calls us to the exercise of those virtues of which we are lamenting our deprivation.”

“The greatest benefit which one friend can confer upon another, is to guard, and excite, and elevate his virtues. This your mother will still perform, if you diligently preserve the memory of her life, and of her death: a life, so far as I can learn, useful, wise, and innocent; and a death resigned, peaceful, and holy. I cannot forbear to mention, that neither reason nor revelation denies you to hope, that you may increase her happiness by obeying her precepts, and that she may, in her present state, look with pleasure upon every act of virtue to which her instructions or example have contributed. Whether this be more than a pleasing dream, or a just opinion of

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separate spirits, is, indeed, of no great importance to us, when we consider ourselves as acting under the eye of God: yet, surely, there is something pleasing in the belief, that our separation from those whom we love is merely corporeal, and it may be a great incitement to virtuous friendship, if it can be made probable, that that union that has received the divine approbation shall continue to eternity.

‘There is one expedient by which you may, in some degree, continue her presence. If you write down minutely what you remember of her from your earliest years, you will read it with great pleasure, and receive from it many hints of soothing recollection, when time shall remove her yet farther from you, and your grief shall be matured to veneration. To this, however painful for the present, I cannot but advise you, as to a source of comfort and satisfaction in the time to come, for all comfort and all satisfaction is sincerely wished you by, dear Sir, your most obliged, most obedient, and most humble servant,

‘SAM. JOHNSON.’

TO A ‘FRESHMAN’

‘TO BENNET LANGTON, ESQ., OF TRINITY COLLEGE, OXFORD.

‘DEAR SIR,—Though I might have expected to hear from you, upon your entrance into a new state of life at a new place, yet, recollecting (not without some degree of shame) that I owe you a letter upon an old account, I think it my part to write first. This, indeed, I do not only from complaisance, but from interest; for living on in the old way, I am very glad

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of a correspondent so capable as yourself, to diversify the hours. You have, at present, too many novelties about you to need any help from me to drive along your time.

‘I know not any thing more pleasant, or more instructive, than to compare experience with expectation, or to register from time to time the difference between idea and reality. It is by this kind of observation that we grow daily less liable to be disappointed. You, who are very capable of anticipating futurity, and raising phantoms before your own eyes, must often have imagined to yourself an academical life, and have conceived what would be the manners, the views, and the conversation, of men devoted to letters; how they would direct their studies, and how they would regulate their lives. Let me know what you expected, and what you have found. At least record it to yourself, before custom has reconciled you to the scenes before you, and the disparity of your discoveries to your hopes has vanished from your mind. It is a rule never to be forgotten, that whatever strikes strongly, should be described while the first impression remains fresh upon the mind.

‘I love, dear Sir, to think on you, and therefore should willingly write more to you, but that the post will not now give me leave to do more than send my compliments to Mr. Warton, and tell you that I am, dear Sir, most affectionately, your very humble servant,

‘SAM. JOHNSON.’

‘June 28, 1757.’

BROTHERS AND SISTERS

TO BENNET LANGTON, ESQ., AT LANGTON, LINCOLN-SHIRE.

‘DEAREST SIR,—I must indeed have slept very fast, not to have been awakened by your letter. None of your suspicions are true; I am not much richer than when you left me; and, what is worse, my omission of an answer to your first letter, will prove that I am not much wiser. But I go on as I formerly did, designing to be some time or other both rich and wise; and yet cultivate neither mind nor fortune. Do you take notice of my example, and learn the danger of delay. When I was as you are now, towering in the confidence of twenty-one, little did I suspect that I should be at forty-nine, what I now am.

‘But you do not seem to need my admonition. You are busy in acquiring and in communicating knowledge, and while you are studying, enjoy the end of study, by making others wiser and happier. I was much pleased with the tale that you told me of being tutor to your sisters. I, who have no sisters nor brothers, look with some degree of innocent envy on those who may be said to be born friends, and cannot see, without wonder, how rarely that native union is afterwards regarded. It sometimes, indeed, happens, that some supervenient cause of discord may overpower this original amity; but it seems to me more frequently thrown away with levity, or lost by negligence, than destroyed by injury or violence. We tell the ladies that good wives make good husbands; I believe it is a more certain position that good brothers make good sisters. . . .

‘I wish I could tell you of any great good to which I was approaching, but at present my prospects do not much delight me; however, I am always pleased when

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I find that you, dear Sir, remember your affectionate,
humble servant,

‘SAM. JOHNSON.’

‘Jan. 9, 1758.’

A SOLDIER’S DEATH

‘TO BENNET LANGTON, ESQ., AT LANGTON, NEAR
SPILSBY, LINCOLNSHIRE.

‘DEAR SIR,—I should be sorry to think that what engrosses the attention of my friend, should have no part of mine. Your mind is now full of the fate of Drury;¹ but his fate is past, and nothing remains but to try what reflection will suggest to mitigate the terrors of a violent death, which is more formidable at first glance, than on a nearer and more steady view.

‘A violent death is never very painful; the only danger is lest it should be unprovided. But if a man can be supposed to make no provision for death in war, what can be the state that would have awakened him to the care of futurity? When would that man have prepared himself to die, who went to seek death without preparation? What, then, can be the reason why we lament more him that dies of a wound, than him that dies of a fever? A man that languishes with disease, ends his life with more pain, but with less virtue; he leaves no example to his friends, nor bequeaths any honour to his descendants. The only reason why we lament a soldier’s death, is, that we think he might

¹ Major-General Alexander Drury, of the first regiment of foot-guards, who fell in gallant discharge of his duty, near St. Cas, in the well-known unfortunate expedition against France, in 1758. His lady and Mr. Langton’s mother were sisters.—*Boswell*.

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have lived longer; yet this cause of grief is common to many other kinds of death which are not so passionately bewailed.

'The truth is, that every death is violent which is the effect of accident; every death which is not gradually brought on by the miseries of age, or when life is extinguished for any other reason than that it is burnt out. He that dies before sixty, of a cold or consumption, dies, in reality, by a violent death; yet death is borne with patience only because the cause of his untimely end is silent and invisible. Let us endeavour to see things as they are, and then enquire whether we ought to complain. Whether to see life as it is, will give us much consolation, I know not, but the consolation which is drawn from truth, if any there be, is solid and durable, that which may be derived from error must be, like its original, fallacious and fugitive

'I am, dear, dear Sir, your most humble servant,

'SAM. JOHNSON.'

'Sept. 21, 1758.'

TO A FRIEND IN ITALY

Johnson had now (1761) for some years admitted Mr. Baretti¹ to his intimacy; nor did their friendship cease upon their being separated by Baretti's revisiting his native country, as appears from Johnson's letters to him.

'TO MR. JOSEPH BARETTI, AT MILAN.

'You reproach me very often with parsimony of writing: but you may discover by the extent of my

¹ An Italian of considerable literature who came to England, where he was employed in the capacity both of a language master and an author.—*Boswell*.

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paper, that I design to recompense rarity by length. A short letter to a distant friend is, in my opinion, an insult like that of a slight bow or cursory salutation;—a proof of unwillingness to do much, even when there is a necessity of doing something. Yet it must be remembered, that he who continues the same course of life in the same place, will have little to tell. One week and one year are very like one another. The silent changes made by time are not always perceived; and if they are not perceived, cannot be recounted.

‘I have risen and lain down, talked and mused, while you have roved over a considerable part of Europe; yet I have not envied my Baretti any of his pleasures, though, perhaps, I have envied others his company: and I am glad to have other nations made acquainted with the character of the English, by a traveller who has so nicely inspected our manners, and so successfully studied our literature.

‘I received your kind letter from Falmouth, in which you gave me notice of your departure for Lisbon, and another from Lisbon, in which you told me, that you were to leave Portugal in a few days. To either of these how could any answer be returned? I have had a third from Turin, complaining that I have not answered the former. Your English style still continues in its purity and vigour. With vigour your genius will supply it; but its purity must be continued by close attention. To use two languages familiarly, and without contaminating one by the other, is very difficult: and to use more than two is hardly to be hoped. The praises which some have received for their multiplicity of languages, may be sufficient to excite industry, but can hardly generate confidence.

‘I know not whether I can heartily rejoice at the kind reception which you have found, or at the popularity

to which you are exalted. I am willing that your merit should be distinguished; but cannot wish that your affections may be gained. I would have you happy wherever you are: yet I would have you wish to return to England. If ever you visit us again, you will find the kindness of your friends undiminished.

'You know that we have a new King and a new Parliament. We were so weary of our old King, that we are much pleased with his successor; of whom we are so much inclined to hope great things, that most of us begin already to believe them. The young man is hitherto blameless; but it would be unreasonable to expect much from the immaturity of juvenile years, and the ignorance of princely education. He has been long in the hands of the Scots, and has already favoured them more than the English will contentedly endure. But, perhaps, he scarcely knows whom he has distinguished, or whom he has disgusted.

'The artists have instituted a yearly exhibition of pictures and statues, in imitation, as I am told, of foreign academies. This year was the second exhibition. They please themselves much with the multitude of spectators, and imagine that the English School will rise in reputation. Reynolds is without a rival, and continues to add thousands to thousands, which he deserves, among other excellencies, by retaining his kindness for Baretta. This exhibition has filled the heads of the artists and lovers of art. Surely life, if it be not long, is tedious, since we are forced to call in the assistance of so many trifles to rid us of our time, of that time which never can return. . . .

'I hope you take care to keep an exact journal, and to register all occurrences and observations, for your friends here expect such a book of travels as has not been often seen. You have given us good specimens

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in your letters from Lisbon. I wish you had stayed longer in Spain, for no country is less known to the rest of Europe; but the quickness of your discernment must make amends for the celerity of your motions. He that knows which way to direct his view, sees much in a little time.

‘Write to me very often, and I will not neglect to write to you; and I may, perhaps, in time, get something to write: at least, you will know by my letters, whatever else they may have or want, that I continue to be your most affectionate friend,

‘SAM. JOHNSON.’

‘London, June 10, 1761.’

A REFUSAL

A lady having solicited him to obtain the Archbishop of Canterbury’s patronage to have her son sent to the University, he wrote to her the following answer:

‘MADAM,—I hope you will believe that my delay in answering your letter could proceed only from my unwillingness to destroy any hope that you had formed. Hope is itself a species of happiness, and, perhaps, the chief happiness which this world affords; but, like all other pleasures immoderately enjoyed, the excesses of hope must be expiated by pain; and expectations, improperly indulged, must end in disappointment. If it be asked, what is the improper expectation which it is dangerous to indulge, experience will quickly answer, that it is such expectation as is dictated not by reason, but by desire; expectation raised, not by common occurrences of life, but by the wants of the expectant; an expectation that requires the common

course of things to be changed, and the general rules of action to be broken.

‘When you made your request to me, you should have considered, Madam, what you were asking. You ask me to solicit a great man, to whom I never spoke, for a young person whom I had never seen, upon a supposition which I had no means of knowing to be true. There is no reason why, amongst all the great, I should choose to supplicate the Archbishop, nor why, among all the possible objects of his bounty, the Archbishop should choose your son. I know, Madam, how unwillingly conviction is admitted, when interest opposes it, but surely, Madam, you must allow, that there is no reason why that should be done by me, which every other man may do with equal reason, and which, indeed, no man can do properly, without some very particular relation both to the Archbishop and to you. If I could help you in this exigence by any proper means, it would give me pleasure; but this proposal is so very remote from all usual methods, that I cannot comply with it, but at the risk of such answer and suspicions as I believe you do not wish me to undergo.

‘I have seen your son this morning; he seems a pretty youth, and will, perhaps, find some better friend than I can procure him; but, though he should at last miss the University, he may still be wise, useful, and happy.

‘I am, Madam, your most humble servant,

‘SAM. JOHNSON.’

‘June 8, 1762.’

TO A BAD CORRESPONDENT

'TO BENNET LANGTON, ESQ., AT LANGTON, NEAR
SPILSBY, LINCOLNSHIRE.

'DEAR SIR,—What your friends have done, that from your departure till now nothing has been heard of you, none of us are able to inform the rest; but as we are all neglected alike, no one thinks himself entitled to the privilege of complaint.

'I should have known nothing of you or of Langton, from the time that dear Miss Langton left us, had not I met Mr. Simpson, of Lincoln, one day in the street, by whom I was informed that Mr. Langton, your Mamma, and yourself, had been all ill, but that you were all recovered.

'That sickness should suspend your correspondence, I did not wonder; but hoped that it would be renewed at your recovery.

'Since you will not inform us where you are, or how you live, I know not whether you desire to know any thing of us. However, I will tell you that THE CLUB subsists; but we have the loss of Burke's company since he has been engaged in public business, in which he has gained more reputation than perhaps any man at his (first) appearance ever gained before. He made two speeches in the House for repealing the Stamp-act, which were publicly commended by Mr. Pitt, and have filled the town with wonder.

'Burke is a great man by nature, and is expected soon to attain civil greatness. I am grown greater too, for I have maintained the newspapers these many weeks, and what is greater still, I have risen every morning since New-year's day, at about eight, when I was up, I have indeed done but little; yet it is no slight

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advancement to obtain, for so many hours more, the consciousness of being.

'I wish you were in my new study; I am now writing the first letter in it. I think it looks very pretty about me.

'You will pay my respects to all my Lincolnshire friends. I am, dear Sir, most affectionately yours,

'SAM. JOHNSON.'

'March 9, 1766.'

'Johnson's-court, Fleet-street.'

THE 'TRANSLATIONS' OF 'OSSIAN'

'MR. JAMES MACPHERSON,¹—I received your foolish and impudent letter. Any violence offered me I shall do my best to repel, and what I cannot do for myself, the law shall do for me. I hope I shall never be deterred from detecting what I think a cheat, by the menaces of a ruffian.

'What would you have me retract? I thought your book an imposture; I think it an imposture still. For this opinion I have given my reasons to the public, which I here dare you to refute. Your rage I defy. Your abilities, since your Homer,² are not so formidable; and what I hear of your morals, inclines me to pay regard not to what you shall say, but to what you shall prove. You may print this if you will.

'SAM JOHNSON.'

¹ James Macpherson, a Scottish author, claimed to have discovered a number of ancient Gaelic poems by 'Ossian,' a third century bard, and published 'translations' of them.

² A translation of the *Iliad*, published 1773.

BACK IN LONDON

ON Monday, March 27, 1775, I breakfasted with him at Mr. Strahan's. He told us, that he was engaged to go that evening to Mrs. Abington's benefit. 'She was visiting some ladies whom I was visiting, and begged that I would come to her benefit. I told her I could not hear. but she insisted so much on my coming, that it would have been brutal to have refused her.' This was a speech quite characteristical. He loved to bring forward his having been in the gay circles of life; and he was, perhaps, a little vain of the solicitations of this elegant and fashionable actress.

Mr. Strahan had taken a poor boy from the country as an apprentice, upon Johnson's recommendation. Johnson having inquired after him, said, 'Mr. Strahan, let me have five guineas on account, and I'll give this boy one. Nay, if a man recommends a boy, and does nothing for him, it is sad work. Call him down.'

I followed him into the court-yard, behind Mr. Strahan's house; and there I had proof of what I had heard him profess, that he talked alike to all: 'Some people tell you that they let themselves down to the capacity of their hearers. I never do that. I speak uniformly, in as intelligible a manner as I can.'

'Well, my, boy, how do you go on?'

'Pretty well, Sir; but they are afraid I an't strong enough for some parts of the business.'

JOHNSON: 'Why, I shall be sorry for it, for when you consider with how little mental power and corporeal labour a printer can get a guinea a week, it is a very desirable occupation for you. Do you hear,—take all the pains you can; and if this does not do, we must

think of some other way of life for you. There's a guinea.'

The slow and sonorous solemnity with which, while he bent himself down, he addressed a little, thick, short-legged boy, contrasted with the boy's awkwardness and awe, could not but excite some ludicrous emotions.

I met him at Drury-lane play-house in the evening. Sir Joshua Reynolds, at Mrs. Abington's request, had promised to bring a body of wits to her benefit; and having secured forty places in the front boxes, had done me the honour to put me in the group. Johnson sat on the seat directly behind me; and as he could neither see nor hear at such a distance from the stage, he was wrapped up in grave abstraction, and seemed quite a cloud, amidst all the sunshine of glitter and gaiety. I wondered at his patience in sitting out a play of five acts, and a farce of two.

On Friday, March 31, I supped with him and some friends at a tavern. One of the company attempted, with too much forwardness, to rally him on his late appearance at the theatre; but had reason to repent of his temerity. 'Why, Sir, did you go to Mrs. Abington's benefit? Did you see?'

JOHNSON: 'No, Sir.'

'Did you hear?'

JOHNSON: 'No, Sir.'

'Why then, Sir, did you go?'

JOHNSON: 'Because, Sir, she is a favourite of the public; and when the public cares the thousandth part for you that it does for her, I will go to your benefit, too.'

Next morning I won a small bet from Lady Diana Beauclerk, by asking him as to one of his particularities, which her Ladyship laid I durst not do. It seems

he had been frequently observed at the CLUB to put into his pocket the Seville oranges, after he had squeezed the juice of them into the drink which he made for himself. Beauclerk and Garrick talked of it to me, and seemed to think that he had a strange unwillingness to be discovered. We could not divine what he did with them, and this was the bold question to be put.

I saw on his table the spoils of the preceding night, some fresh peels, nicely scraped and cut into pieces. 'Oh, Sir! (said I) I now partly see what you do with the squeezed oranges which you put into your pocket at the CLUB.'

JOHNSON: 'I have a great love for them.'

BOSWELL: 'And pray, Sir, what do you do with them? You scrape them, it seems, very neatly, and what next?'

JOHNSON: 'Let them dry, Sir.'

BOSWELL: 'And what next?'

JOHNSON: 'Nay, Sir, you shall know their fate no further.'

BOSWELL: 'Then the world must be left in the dark. It must be said, (assuming a mock solemnity) he scraped them, and let them dry, but what he did with them next, he never could be prevailed upon to tell.'

JOHNSON: 'Nay, Sir, you should say it more emphatically:—he could not be prevailed upon, even by his dearest friends, to tell.'

He had this morning received his diploma as Doctor of Laws from the University of Oxford. He did not vaunt his new dignity, but I understood he was highly pleased with it.

On Thursday, April 6, I dined with him at Mr. Thomas Davies's.

Dr. Johnson, as usual, spoke contemptuously of

Colley Cibber. 'It is wonderful that a man, who for forty years had lived with the great and witty, should have acquired so ill the talents of conversation: and he had but half to furnish; for one half of what he said was oaths.'

We got into an argument whether the judges who went to India might with propriety engage in trade. Johnson warmly maintained that they might.

'For why (he urged) should not judges get riches, as well as those who deserve them less?'

I said, they should have sufficient salaries, and have nothing to take off their attention from the affairs of the public.

JOHNSON. 'No judge, Sir, can give his whole attention to his office, and it is very proper that he should employ what time he has to himself, to his own advantage, in the most profitable manner.'

'Then, Sir, (said Davies, who enlivened the dispute by making it somewhat dramatic,) he may become an insurer; and when he is going to the bench, he may be stopped,—"Your Lordship cannot go yet: here is a bunch of invoices: several ships are about to sail."'

JOHNSON: 'Sir, you may as well say a judge should not have a house; for they may come and tell him, "Your Lordship's house is on fire"; and so, instead of minding the business of his court, he is to be occupied in getting the engine with the greatest speed. There is no end of this. Every judge who has land, trades to a certain extent in corn or in cattle, and in the land itself, undoubtedly. His steward acts for him, and so do clerks for a great merchant. No, Sir, there is no profession to which a man gives a very great proportion of his time. It is wonderful, when a calculation is made, how little the mind is actually employed in the discharge of any profession. No man would be a

judge, upon the condition of being totally a judge. The best employed lawyer has his mind at work but for a small proportion of his time: a great deal of his occupation is merely mechanical. I once wrote for a magazine: I made a calculation, that if I should write but a page a day, at the same rate, I should, in ten years, write nine volumes in folio, of an ordinary size and print.'

Friday, April 7, I dined with him at a tavern, with a numerous company.¹

Ossian being mentioned,—

One of the company suggested an internal objection to the antiquity of the poetry said to be Ossian's, that we do not find the wolf in it, which must have been the case had it been of that age.

The mention of the wolf had led Johnson to think of other wild beasts, and while Sir Joshua Reynolds and Mr. Langton were carrying on a dialogue about something which engaged them earnestly, he, in the midst of it, broke out, 'Pennant tells of bears—' (what he added, I have forgotten) They went on, while he being dull of hearing, did not perceive, or, if he did, was not willing to break off his talk; so he continued to vociferate his remarks, and *bear* ('like a word in a catch,' as Beauclerk said) was repeatedly heard at intervals, which coming from him who, by those who did not know him, had been so often assimilated to that ferocious animal, while we who were sitting around could hardly stifle our laughter, produced a very ludicrous effect.

Silence having ensued, he proceeded: 'We are told, that the black bear is innocent; but I should not like

¹ A meeting of the Club. Fox, though president, was apparently absent. The following members were present. Beauclerk, Boswell, Chamier, Gibbon, Johnson, Langton, Percy, Reynolds, Steevens.—Records of the Club.

to trust myself with him.' Mr. Gibbon¹ muttered, in a low tone of voice, 'I should not like to trust myself with *you*.'

On Friday, April 14, being Good-Friday, I repaired to him in the morning, according to my usual custom on that day, and breakfasted with him. I observed that he fasted very strictly, that he did not even taste bread, and took no milk with his tea, I suppose because it is a kind of animal food.

As we walked to St. Clement's church and saw several shops open upon this most solemn fast-day of the Christian world, I remarked, that one disadvantage arising from the immensity of London was, that nobody was heeded by his neighbour; there was no fear of censure for not observing Good-Friday, as it ought to be kept, and as it is kept in country towns. He said, it was, upon the whole, very well observed even in London. He, however, owned that London was too large.

After the evening service, he said, 'Come, you shall go home with me, and sit just an hour.' But he was better than his word; for after we had drunk tea with Mrs. Williams, he asked me to go up to his study with him, where we sat a long while together in a serene undisturbed frame of mind, sometimes in silence, and sometimes conversing, as we felt ourselves inclined, or properly speaking, as *he* was inclined; for during all the course of my long intimacy with him, my respectful attention never abated, and my wish to hear him was such, that I constantly watched every dawning of communication from that great and illuminated mind.

He was pleased to say, 'If you come to settle here, we will have one day in the week on which we will meet by ourselves. That is the happiest conversation where

¹ Author of *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1764).

there is no competition, no vanity, but a calm, quiet interchange of sentiments.'

In his private register this evening is thus marked, 'Boswell sat with me till night; we had some serious talk.' It also appears from the same record, that after I left him he was occupied in religious duties, in 'giving Francis, his servant, some directions for preparation to communicate; in reviewing his life, and resolving on better conduct.' No saint, however, in the course of his religious warfare, was more sensible of the unhappy failure of pious resolves than Johnson. He said, one day, talking to an acquaintance on the subject, 'Sir, hell is paved with good intentions.'

17

A TRIP TO FRANCE

'TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

'MY DEAR SIR,—I now write to you, lest in some of your freaks and humours you should fancy yourself neglected. Such fancies I must entreat you never to admit, at least never to indulge for my regard for you is so radicated and fixed, that it is become part of my mind, and cannot be effaced but by some cause uncommonly violent; therefore, whether I write or not, set your thoughts at rest. I now write to tell you that I shall not very soon write again, for I am to set out to-morrow on another journey. . . .

'I am, Sir, &c.

'SAM JOHNSON.'

'September 14, 1775.'

What he mentions in such light terms was no less than a tour of France with Mr. and Mrs. Thrale. This was the only time in his life that he went upon the Continent.

When I met him in London the following year, the account which he gave me of his French tour, was, 'Sir, I have seen all the visibilities of Paris, and around it, but to have formed an acquaintance with the people there, would have required more time than I could stay.

'The great in France live very magnificently, but the rest very miserably. There is no happy middle state, as in England; The shops of Paris are mean; the meat in the markets is such as would be sent to a gaol in England; and Mr. Thrale justly observed, that the cookery of the French was forced upon them by necessity, for they could not eat their meat, unless they added some taste to it.

'The French are an indelicate people, they will spit upon any place. At Madame ——'s, a literary lady of rank, the footman took the sugar in his fingers, and threw it into my coffee. I was going to put it aside, but hearing it was made on purpose for me, I e'en tasted Tom's fingers. The same lady would needs make tea *à l'Angloise*. The spout of the tea-pot did not pour freely; she bade the footman blow into it. France is worse than Scotland in every thing but climate. Nature has done more for the French; but they have done less for themselves than the Scotch have done.'

It happened that Foote was at Paris at the same time with Dr. Johnson. He told me, that the French were quite astonished at his figure and manner, and at his dress, which he obstinately continued exactly as in London,—his brown clothes, black stockings, and plain shirt. He mentioned, that an Irishman said to Johnson, 'Sir, you have not seen the best French players.'

JOHNSON: 'Players, Sir ! I look on them as no better than creatures set upon tables and joint-stools to make faces and produce laughter, like dancing dogs.'

'But, Sir, you will allow that some players are better than others ?'

JOHNSON: 'Yes, Sir, as some dogs dance better than others.'

While Johnson was in France, he was generally very resolute in speaking Latin. It was a maxim with him, that a man should not let himself down, by speaking a language which he speaks imperfectly. Indeed, we must have often observed how inferior, how much like a child a man appears, who speaks a broken tongue. When Sir Joshua Reynolds, at one of the dinners of the Royal Academy, presented him to a Frenchman of great distinction, he would not deign to speak French, but talked Latin, though his Excellency did not understand it, owing, perhaps, to Johnson's English pronunciation: yet upon another occasion he was observed to speak French to a Frenchman of high rank, who spoke English, and being asked the reason, with some expression of surprise,—he answered, 'Because I think my French is as good as his English.'

18

A MEETING WITH WILKES

HAVING arrived in London late on Friday, the 15th of March, 1776, I hastened next morning to wait on Dr. Johnson, at his house, but found he was removed from Johnson's-court, No. 7, to Bolt-court, No. 8, still keeping to his favourite Fleet-street. My

reflection at this time upon this change, as marked in my journal, is as follows: 'I felt a foolish regret that he had left a court which bore his name,¹ but it was not foolish to be affected with some tenderness of regard for a place in which I had seen him a good deal, from whence I had often issued a better and a happier man than when I went in, and which had often appeared to my imagination, while I trod its pavement in the solemn darkness of the night, to be sacred to wisdom and piety.'

On Wednesday, April 3, in the morning, I found him very busy putting his books in order, and as they were generally very old ones, clouds of dust were flying around him. He had on a pair of large gloves such as hedgers use. His present appearance put me in mind of my uncle, Dr. Boswell's description of him, 'A robust genius, born to grapple with whole libraries.'

I gave him an account of a conversation which had passed between me and Captain Cook, the day before, and he was much pleased with the conscientious accuracy of that celebrated circumnavigator, who set me right as to many of the exaggerated accounts given by Dr Hawkesworth of his voyages.

I told him that while I was with the Captain, I caught the enthusiasm of curiosity and adventure, and felt a strong inclination to go with him on his next voyage.

JOHNSON: 'Why, Sir, a man *does* feel so, till he considers how very little he can learn from such voyages.'

BOSWELL: 'But one is carried away with the general grand and indistinct notion of A VOYAGE ROUND THE WORLD.'

JOHNSON: 'Yes, Sir, but a man is to guard himself against taking a thing in general.'

¹ He said, when in Scotland, that he was *Johnson of that ilk*.

I said I was certain that a great part of what we are told by the travellers to the South Sea must be conjecture, because they had not enough of the language of those countries to understand so much as they have related.

Dr. Johnson was of the same opinion. He upon another occasion, when a friend mentioned to him several extraordinary facts, as communicated to him by the circumnavigators, shly observed, 'Sir, I never before knew how much I was respected by these gentlemen: they told *me* none of these things.'

He had been in company with Omai, a native of one of the South Sea islands, after he had been some time in this country. He was struck by the elegance of his behaviour, and accounted for it thus. 'Sir, he had passed his time, while in England, only in the best company, so that all that he had acquired of our manners was genteel. As a proof of this, Sir, Lord Mulgrave and he dined one day at Streatham, they sat with their backs to the light fronting me, so that I could not see distinctly; and there was so little of the savage in Omai, that I was afraid to speak to either, lest I should mistake one for the other.'

On Friday, April 12, Johnson and I supped at the Crown and Anchor tavern, in company with Sir Joshua Reynolds. We discussed the question whether drinking improved conversation and benevolence. Sir Joshua maintained it did.

JOHNSON: 'No, Sir: before dinner men meet with great inequality of understanding, and those who are conscious of their inferiority, have the modesty not to talk. When they have drunk wine, every man feels himself happy, and loses that modesty, and grows impudent and vociferous: but he is not improved; he is only not sensible of his defects.'

Sir Joshua said the Doctor was talking of the effects of excess in wine, but that a moderate glass enlivened the mind, by giving a proper circulation to the blood. 'I am (said he) in very good spirits, when I get up in the morning. By dinner-time I am exhausted; wine puts me in the same state as when I got up, and I am sure that moderate drinking makes people talk better.'

JOHNSON: 'No, Sir, wine gives not light, gay, ideal hilarity, but tumultuous, noisy, clamorous merriment. I have heard none of those drunken,—nay, drunken is a coarse word,—none of those *vinous* flights.'

SIR JOSHUA: 'Because you have sat by, quite sober, and felt an envy of the happiness of those who were drinking.'

JOHNSON: 'Perhaps contempt.—And, Sir, it is not necessary to be drunk one's self, to relish the wit of drunkenness. Wit is wit, by whatever means it is produced, and, if good, will appear so at all times. I admit that the spirits are raised by drinking, as by the common participation of any pleasure, cock-fighting or bear-baiting will raise the spirits of a company, as drinking does, though surely they will not improve conversation. I also admit that there are some sluggish men who are improved by drinking; as there are fruits which are not good till they are rotten. There are such men, but they are medlars.'

My desire of being acquainted with celebrated men of every description, had made me, much about the same time, obtain an introduction to Dr. Samuel Johnson and to John Wilkes, Esq. Two men more different could perhaps not be selected out of all mankind. They had even attacked one another with some asperity in their writings; yet I lived in habits of friendship with both.

A MEETING WITH WILKES

My worthy booksellers and friends, Messieurs Dilly in the Poultry, at whose hospitable and well-covered table I have seen a greater number of literary men, than at any other, except that of Sir Joshua Reynolds, had invited me to meet Mr. Wilkes and some more gentlemen on Wednesday, May 15, 1776.

‘Pray (said I) let us have Dr. Johnson.’

‘What, with Mr. Wilkes? Not for the world; (said Mr. Edward Dilly) Dr. Johnson would never forgive me.’

‘Come, (said I) if you’ll let me negotiate for you, I will be answerable that all shall go well.’

DILLY ‘Nay, if you will take it upon you, I am sure I shall be very happy to see them both here.’

Notwithstanding the high veneration which I entertained for Dr. Johnson, I was sensible that he was sometimes a little actuated by the spirit of contradiction, and by means of that I hoped I should gain my point. I was persuaded that if I had come upon him with a direct proposal, ‘Sir, will you dine in company with Jack Wilkes?’ he would have flown into a passion, and would probably have answered, ‘Dine with Jack Wilkes, Sir! I’d as soon dine with Jack Ketch.’ I therefore, while we were sitting quietly by ourselves at his house in an evening, took occasion to open my plan thus.—

‘Mr. Dilly, Sir, sends his respectful compliments to you, and would be happy if you would do him the honour to dine with him on Wednesday next along with me, as I must soon go to Scotland.’

JOHNSON: ‘Sir, I am obliged to Mr. Dilly. I will wait upon him——’

BOSWELL: ‘Provided, Sir, I suppose, that the company which he is to have, is agreeable to you.’

JOHNSON: ‘What do you mean, Sir? What do you

take me for? Do you think I am so ignorant of the world, as to imagine that I am to prescribe to a gentleman what company he is to have at his table?’

BOSWELL: ‘I beg your pardon, Sir, for wishing to prevent you from meeting people whom you might not like. Perhaps he may have some of what he calls his patriotic friends with him.’

JOHNSON: ‘Well, Sir, and what then? What care I for his *patriotic friends*? Poh!’

BOSWELL: ‘I should not be surprised to find Jack Wilkes there.’

JOHNSON: ‘And if Jack Wilkes *should* be there, what is that to *me*, Sir? My dear friend, let us have no more of this. I am sorry to be angry with you; but really it is treating me strangely to talk to me as if I could not meet any company whatever, occasionally.’

BOSWELL: ‘Pray, forgive me, Sir: I meant well. But you shall meet whoever comes, for me.’

Thus I secured him, and told Dilly that he would find him very well pleased to be one of his guests on the day appointed.

Upon the much-expected Wednesday, I called on him about half an hour before dinner, as I often did when we were to dine out together, to see that he was ready in time, and to accompany him. I found him buffeting his books, as upon a former occasion, covered with dust, and making no preparation for going abroad.

‘How is this, Sir? (said I) Don’t you recollect that you are to dine at Mr. Dilly’s?’

JOHNSON: ‘Sir, I did not think of going to Dilly’s: it went out of my head. I have ordered dinner at home with Mrs. Williams.’

BOSWELL: ‘But, my dear Sir, you know you were engaged to Mr. Dilly, and I told him so. He will

expect you, and will be much disappointed if you don't come.'

JOHNSON. 'You must talk to Mrs. Williams about this.'

Here was a sad dilemma. I feared that what I was so confident I had secured would yet be frustrated. He had accustomed himself to shew Mrs. Williams such a degree of humane attention, as frequently imposed some restraint upon him, and I knew that if she should be obstinate, he would not stir. I hastened down stairs to the blind lady's room, and told her I was in great uneasiness, for Dr. Johnson had engaged to me to dine this day at Mr Dilly's, but that he had told me he had forgotten his engagement, and had ordered dinner at home.

'Yes, Sir, (said she, pretty peevishly) Dr. Johnson is to dine at home.'

'Madam, (said I) his respect for you is such, that I know he will not leave you unless you absolutely desire it. But as you have so much of his company, I hope you will be good enough to forego it for a day; as Mr. Dilly is a very worthy man, has frequently had agreeable parties at his house for Dr. Johnson, and will be vexed if the Doctor neglects him to-day. And then, Madam, be pleased to consider my situation; I carried the message, and I assured Mr. Dilly that Dr. Johnson was to come, and no doubt he has made a dinner, and invited a company, and boasted of the honour he expected to have. I shall be quite disgraced if the Doctor is not there.'

She gradually softened to my solicitations, which were certainly as earnest as most entreaties to ladies upon any occasion, and was graciously pleased to empower me to tell Dr. Johnson, 'That all things considered, she thought he should certainly go.'

A MEETING WITH WILKES

I flew back to him, still in dust, and careless of what should be the event, 'indifferent in his choice to go or stay;' but as soon as I had announced to him Mrs. Williams' consent, he roared, 'Frank, a clean shirt,' and was very soon drest. When I had him fairly seated in a hackney-coach with me, I exulted as much as a fortune-hunter who has got an heiress into a post-chaise with him to set out for Gretna-Green.

When we entered Mr. Dilly's drawing-room, he found himself in the midst of a company he did not know. I kept myself snug and silent, watching how he would conduct himself. I observed him whispering to Mr. Dilly, 'Who is that gentleman, Sir?'

'Mr. Arthur Lee.'

JOHNSON. 'Too, too, too,' (under his breath) which was one of his habitual mutterings.

Mr. Arthur Lee could not but be very obnoxious to Johnson, for he was not only a *patriot* but an *American*. He was afterwards minister from the United States at the court of Madrid.

'And who is the gentleman in lace?'

'Mr. Wilkes, Sir.'

This information confounded him still more, he had some difficulty to restrain himself, and taking up a book, sat down upon a window-seat and read, or at least kept his eye upon it intently for some time, till he composed himself. His feelings, I dare say, were awkward enough. But he no doubt recollected his having rated me for supposing that he could be at all disconcerted by any company, and he, therefore, resolutely set himself to behave quite as an easy man of the world, who could adapt himself at once to the disposition and manners of those whom he might chance to meet.

The cheering sound of 'Dinner is upon the table,'

dissolved his reverie, and we *all* sat down without any symptom of ill humour.

Mr. Wilkes placed himself next to Dr. Johnson, and behaved to him with so much attention and politeness, that he gained upon him insensibly. No man ate more heartily than Dr. Johnson, or loved better what was nice and delicate. Mr Wilkes was very assiduous in helping him to some fine veal.

'Pray give me leave, Sir:—It is better here—A little of the brown—Some fat, Sir—A little of the stuffing—Some gravy—Let me have the pleasure of giving you some butter—Allow me to recommend a squeeze of this orange;—or the lemon, perhaps, may have more zest.'

'Sir, Sir, I am obliged to you, Sir,' cried Johnson, bowing and turning his head to him with a look for some time of 'surly virtue,'¹ but, in a short while, of complacency.

19

PERCY² AND BOSWELL 'TOSSED'

ON Sunday, April 12, 1778, he and I, and Mrs. Williams, went to dine with the Reverend Dr. Percy.

Books of travels having been mentioned, Johnson

¹ Johnson's *London*, v. 145.

² Thomas Percy (1729–1811) was a grocer's son. He edited the *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* (1765), based on an old manuscript which he rescued in a house at Shifnal, in Shropshire, from the hands of a housemaid who was on the point of lighting a fire with it. Later, he was made chaplain to the Duke of Northumberland, through whose influence he became Dean of Carlisle (1778), and Bishop of Dromore (1782).

praised Pennant very highly. Dr. Percy, knowing himself to be the heir male of the ancient Percies, could not sit quietly and hear a man praised who had spoken disrespectfully of Alnwick Castle and the Duke's pleasure grounds. He therefore opposed Johnson eagerly.

JOHNSON: 'Pennant in what he has said of Alnwick, has done what he intended, he has made you very angry.'

PERCY: 'He has said the garden is *trim*, which is representing it like a citizen's parterre, when the truth is, there is a very large extent of fine turf and gravel walks.'

JOHNSON: 'According to your own account, Sir, Pennant is right. It is trim. Here is grass cut close, and gravel rolled smooth. Is not that trim? The extent is nothing against that, a mile may be as trim as a square yard. Your extent puts me in mind of the citizen's enlarged dinner, two pieces of roast-beef, and two puddings. There is no variety, no mind exerted in laying out the ground, no trees.'

PERCY: 'He pretends to give the natural history of Northumberland, and yet takes no notice of the immense number of trees planted there of late.'

JOHNSON: 'That, Sir, has nothing to do with the *natural* history, that is *civil* history. A man who gives the natural history of the oak, is not to tell how many oaks have been planted in this place or that. A man who gives the natural history of the cow, is not to tell how many cows are milked at Islington. The animal is the same, whether milked in the Park or at Islington.'

PERCY: 'Pennant does not describe well; a carrier who goes along the side of Loch-lomond would describe it better.'

PERCY AND BOSWELL 'TOSSED'

JOHNSON: 'I think he describes very well.'

PERCY: 'I travelled after him.'

JOHNSON: 'And *I* travelled after him.'

PERCY: 'But, my good friend, you are short-sighted, and do not see so well as I do.'

I wondered at Dr. Percy venturing thus. Dr. Johnson said nothing at the time, but inflammable particles were collecting for a cloud to burst. In a little while Dr. Percy said something more in disparagement of Pennant.

JOHNSON (pointedly) 'This is the resentment of a narrow mind, because he did not find everything in Northumberland.'

PERCY: (feeling the stroke) 'Sir, you may be as rude as you please.'

JOHNSON: 'Hold, Sir! Don't talk of rudeness, remember, Sir, you told me, (puffing hard with passion struggling for a vent) I was short-sighted. We have done with civility. We are to be as rude as we please.'

PERCY: 'Upon my honour, Sir, I did not mean to be uncivil.'

JOHNSON: 'I cannot say so, Sir; for I *did* mean to be uncivil, thinking *you* had been uncivil.'

Dr. Percy rose, ran up to him, and taking him by the hand, assured him affectionately that his meaning had been misunderstood; upon which a reconciliation instantly took place.

JOHNSON. 'My dear Sir, I am willing you should *hang* Pennant.'

We had a calm after the storm, stayed the evening and supped, and were pleasant and gay. But Dr. Percy told me he was very uneasy at what had passed; for there was a gentleman there who was acquainted with the Northumberland family, to whom he hoped to

have appeared more respectable, by showing how intimate he was with Dr. Johnson, and who might now, on the contrary, go away with an opinion to his disadvantage. He begged I would mention this to Dr. Johnson, which I afterwards did.

His observation upon it was, 'This comes of *stratagem*; had he told me that he wished to appear to advantage before that gentleman, he should have been at the top of the house, all the time.' He spoke of Dr. Percy in the handsomest terms.

'Then, Sir, (said I) may I be allowed to suggest a mode by which you may effectually counteract any unfavourable report of what passed? I will write a letter to you upon the subject of the unlucky contest of that day, and you will be kind enough to put in writing as an answer to that letter, what you have now said, and as Lord Percy is to dine with us at General Paoli's soon, I will take an opportunity to read the correspondence in his Lordship's presence.'

This friendly scheme was accordingly carried into execution without Dr. Percy's knowledge. Johnson's letter placed Dr. Percy's unquestionable merit in the fairest point of view; and I contrived that Lord Percy should hear the correspondence, by introducing it at General Paoli's, as an instance of Dr. Johnson's kind disposition towards one in whom his Lordship was interested.

I breakfasted the day after with Dr. Percy, and informed him of my scheme, and its happy completion, for which he thanked me in the warmest terms, and was highly delighted with Dr. Johnson's letter in his praise, of which I gave him a copy. He said, 'I would rather have this than degrees from all the universities in Europe. It will be for me, and my children and grand-children.'

Johnson's letter:—

'To JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

'SIR,—The debate between Dr. Percy and me is one of those foolish controversies, which begin upon a question which neither party cares how it is decided, and which is, nevertheless, continued to acrimony, by the vanity with which every man resists confutation. Dr. Percy's warmth proceeded from a cause which, perhaps, does him more honour than he could have derived from juster criticism. His abhorrence of Pennant proceeded from his opinion that Pennant had wantonly and indecently censured his patron. His anger made him resolve, that, for having been once wrong, he never should be right. Pennant has much in his notions that I do not like, but still I think him a very intelligent traveller. If Percy is really offended, I am sorry; for he is a man whom I never knew to offend any one. He is a man very willing to learn, and very able to teach; a man, out of whose company I never go without having learned something. It is sure that he vexes me sometimes, but I am afraid it is by making me feel my own ignorance. So much extension of mind, and so much minute accuracy of enquiry, if you survey your whole circle of acquaintance, you will find so scarce, if you find it at all, that you will value Percy by comparison. Lord Hailes¹ is somewhat like him: but Lord Hailes does not, perhaps, go beyond him in research; and I do not know that he equals him in elegance. Percy's attention to poetry has given grace and splendour to his Studies of antiquity. A mere antiquarian is a rugged being.

¹ An eminent Scottish lawyer and historian.

'Upon the whole, you see that what I might say in sport or petulance to him, is very consistent with full conviction of his merit. I am, dear Sir, your most, &c.,

'SAM JOHNSON.'

'April 23, 1778.'

On Wednesday, April 15, I dined with Dr. Johnson at Mr. Dilly's, and was high in spirits, for I had been a good part of the morning with Mr Orme, the able and eloquent historian of Hindostan, who expressed a great admiration of Johnson. 'I do not care (said he) on what subject Johnson talks; but I love better to hear him talk than any body. He either gives you new thoughts, or a new colouring. It is a shame to the nation that he has not been more liberally rewarded. Had I been George the Third, and thought as he did about America, I would have given Johnson three hundred a year for his *Taxation no Tyranny*,¹ alone.'

At Mr. Dilly's to-day were Mrs. Knowles, the ingenious quaker lady, and Miss Seward, the poetess of Lichfield. Before dinner Dr. Johnson seized upon Mr. Charles Sheridan's *Account of the late Revolution in Sweden*, and seemed to read it ravenously, as if he devoured it, which was to all appearance his method of studying.

'He knows how to read better than anyone; (said Mrs. Knowles) he gets at the substance of a book directly; he tears out the heart of it.'

He kept it wrapped up in the tablecloth in his lap during the time of dinner, from an avidity to have one entertainment in readiness, when he should have finished another; resembling (if I may use so coarse a simile) a dog who holds a bone in his paws in reserve,

¹ A pamphlet justifying the taxes levied on the American colonies.

while he eats something else which has been thrown to him.

The subject of cookery having been introduced, he said, 'I could write a better book of cookery than has ever yet been written; it should be a book upon philosophical principles. Pharmacy is now made much more simple. Cookery may be made so, too. A prescription which is now compounded of five ingredients, had formerly fifty in it. So in cookery, if the nature of the ingredients be well known, much fewer will do. Then, as you cannot make bad meat good, I would tell what is the best butcher's meat, the best beef, the best pieces; how to choose young fowls; the proper seasons of different vegetables, and then how to roast, and boil, and compound. But you will see what a book of cookery I shall make! I shall agree with Mr. Dilly for the copyright.'

MISS SEWARD: 'That would be Hercules with the distaff indeed.'

JOHNSON: 'No, Madam. Women can spin very well; but they cannot make a good book of cookery.'

Mrs. Knowles affected to complain that men had much more liberty allowed them than women.

JOHNSON: 'Why, Madam, women have all the liberty they should wish to have. We have all the labour and the danger, and the women all the advantage. We go to sea, we build houses, we do everything, in short, to pay our court to the women.'

MRS. KNOWLES: 'The Doctor reasons very wittily, but not very-convincingly. Now, take the instance of building: the mason's wife, if she is ever seen in liquor, is ruined: the mason may get himself drunk as often as he pleases, with little loss of character; nay, may let his wife and children starve.'

JOHNSON: 'Madam, you must consider, if the mason

does get himself drunk, and let his wife and children starve, the parish will oblige him to find security for their maintenance. We have different modes of restraining evil: stocks for the men, a ducking-stool for women, and a pound for beasts. If we require more perfection from women than from ourselves, it is doing them honour. And women have not the same temptations that we have: they may always live in virtuous company; men must mix in the world indiscriminately. If a woman has no inclination to do what is wrong, being secured from it is no restraint to her. I am at liberty to walk into the Thames; but if I were to try it, my friends would restrain me in Bedlam, and I should be obliged to them.'

MRS. KNOWLES: 'Still, Doctor, I cannot help thinking it a hardship that more indulgence is allowed to men than to women. It gives a superiority to men, to which I do not see how they are entitled.'

JOHNSON: 'It is plain, Madam, one or other must have the superiority. As Shakspeare says, "If two men ride on a horse, one must ride behind"'

DILLY. 'I suppose, Sir, Mrs. Knowles would have them ride in panniers, one on each side.'

JOHNSON: 'Then, Sir, the horse would throw them both.'

MRS. KNOWLES: 'Well, I hope that in another world the sexes will be equal.'

BOSWELL: 'That is being too ambitious, Madam. We might as well desire to be equal with the angels. We shall all, I hope, be happy in a future state, but we must not expect to be all happy in the same degree. It is enough if we are happy according to our several capacities. A worthy carman will get to heaven as well as Sir Isaac Newton. Yet, though equally good, they will not have the same degrees of happiness.'

JOHNSON: 'Probably not.'

He, I know not how or why, made a sudden transition to a subject upon which he was a violent aggressor; for he said, 'I am willing to love all mankind, *except an American*'; and his inflammable corruption bursting into horrid fire, he 'breathed out threatenings and slaughter'; calling them 'Rascals—Robbers—Pirates,' and exclaiming, he'd 'burn and destroy them.'

Miss Seward, looking to him with mild, but steady astonishment, said, 'Sir, this is an instance that we are always most violent against those whom we have injured.'

He was irritated still more by this delicate and keen reproach; and roared out another tremendous volley, which one might fancy could be heard across the Atlantic. During this tempest I sat in great uneasiness, lamenting his heat of temper, till, by degrees, I diverted his attention to other topics.

We remained together till it was pretty late. Notwithstanding occasional explosions of violence, we were all delighted upon the whole with Johnson. I compared him at this time to a warm West Indian climate, where you have a bright sun, quick vegetation, luxuriant foliage, luscious fruits, but where the same heat sometimes produces thunder, lightning, and earthquakes in a terrible degree.

April 17, being Good-Friday, I waited on Johnson, as usual. I observed at breakfast, that although it was part of his abstemious discipline, on this most solemn feast, to take no milk in his tea, yet when Mrs. Desmoulins inadvertently poured it in, he did not reject it.

I expressed some inclination to publish an account of my travels upon the continent of Europe, for which I had a variety of materials collected.

JOHNSON: 'I do not say, Sir, you may not publish your travels; but I give you my opinion, that you would lessen yourself by it. What can you tell of countries so well known as those upon the continent of Europe which you have visited?'

BOSWELL: 'But I can give an entertaining narrative, with many incidents, anecdotes, *jeux d'esprit*, and remarks, so as to make very pleasant reading.'

JOHNSON: 'Why, Sir, most modern travellers in Europe who have published their travels have been laughed at: I would not have you added to the number. Now some of my friends asked me, why I did not give some account of my travels in France. The reason is plain; intelligent readers had seen more of France than I had. *You* might have liked my travels in France, and THE CLUB might have liked them; but, upon the whole, there would have been more ridicule than good produced by them.'

BOSWELL: 'I cannot agree with you, Sir. People would like to read what you say of any thing. Suppose a face has been painted by fifty painters before; still we love to see it done by Sir Joshua.'

JOHNSON: 'True, Sir, but Sir Joshua cannot paint a face when he has not had time to look on it.'

BOSWELL: 'Sir, a sketch of any sort by him is valuable. And, Sir, to talk to you in your own style, (raising my voice and shaking my head) you *should* have given us your travels in France. I am *sure* I am right, and *there's an end on't*.'

I said to him that a great part of what was in his *Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland* had been in his mind before he left London.

JOHNSON: 'Why, yes, Sir, the topics were; and books of travel will be good in proportion to what a man has previously in his mind; his knowing what to observe;

his power of contrasting one mode of life with another. As the Spanish proverb says, "He who would bring home the wealth of the Indies, must carry the wealth of the Indies with him." So it is with travelling; a man must carry knowledge with him, if he would bring home knowledge.'

On Saturday, May 2, 1778, I dined with him at Sir Joshua Reynolds's, where there was a very large company, and a great deal of conversation. There were several people there by no means of the Johnsonian school, so that less attention was paid him than usual, which put him out of humour; and upon some imaginary offence from me, he attacked me with such rudeness, that I was vexed and angry, because it gave those persons an opportunity of enlarging upon his supposed ferocity, and ill treatment of his best friends. I was so much hurt, and had my pride so much roused, that I kept away from him for a week.

On Friday, May 8, I dined with him at Mr. Langton's. I was reserved and silent, which I suppose he perceived, and might recollect the cause. After dinner, when Mr. Langton was called out of the room, and we were by ourselves, he drew his chair near to mine, and said, in a tone of conciliating courtesy, 'Well, how have you done?'

BOSWELL: 'Sir, you have made me very uneasy by your behaviour to me when we were last at Sir Joshua Reynolds's. You know, my dear Sir, no man has greater respect and affection for you, or would sooner go to the end of the world to serve you. Now to treat me so——'

He insisted that I had interrupted him, which I assured him was not the case; and proceeded—'But why treat me so before people who neither love you nor me?'

JOHNSON: 'Well, I am sorry for it. I'll make it up to you twenty different ways, as you please.'

BOSWELL: 'I said to-day to Sir Joshua, when he observed that you *tossed* me sometimes—I don't care how often or how high he tosses me when only friends are present, for then I fall upon soft ground: but I do not like falling on stones, which is the case when enemies are present.—I think this a pretty good image, Sir.'

JOHNSON: 'Sir, it is one of the happiest I have ever heard.'

The truth is, there was no venom in the wounds which he inflicted at any time, unless they were irritated by some malignant infusion by other hands. We were instantly as cordial again as ever, and joined in a hearty laugh at some ludicrous but innocent peculiarities of one of our friends.

JOHNSON: 'I shall be at home to-morrow.'

BOSWELL: 'Then let us dine by ourselves at the Mitre, to keep up the old custom, "the custom of the manor," the custom of the mitre.'

JOHNSON: 'Sir, so it shall be.'

On Saturday, May 9, we fulfilled our purpose of dining by ourselves at the Mitre, according to the old custom. There was, on these occasions, a little circumstance of kind attention to Mrs. Williams, which must not be omitted. Before coming out, and leaving her to dine alone, he gave her her choice of a chicken, a sweetbread, or any other little nice thing, which was carefully sent her from the tavern, ready-drest.



'Carefully sent her from the tavern, ready-drest'

‘THE LIVES OF THE POETS’

I WAS somewhat disappointed in finding that the edition of *The English Poets*, for which he was to write Prefaces and Lives, was not an undertaking directed by him: but that he was to furnish a Preface and Life to any poet the booksellers pleased. I asked him if he would do this to any dunce’s works, if they should ask him.

JOHNSON: ‘Yes, Sir, and *say* he was a dunce.’

On Tuesday, May 12, 1778, I waited on the Earl of Marchmont, to know if his Lordship would favour Dr. Johnson with information concerning Pope, whose Life he was about to write. Johnson had not flattered himself with the hopes of receiving any civility from this nobleman; for he said to me, when I mentioned Lord Marchmont as one who could tell him a great deal about Pope,—‘Sir, he will tell *me* nothing.’ I had the honour of being known to his Lordship, and applied to him of myself, without being commissioned by Johnson. His Lordship behaved in the most polite and obliging manner, promised to tell all he recollected about Pope, and was so very courteous as to say, ‘Tell Dr. Johnson I have a great respect for him, and am ready to shew it in any way I can. I am to be in the city to-morrow, and will call at his house as I return.’

Elated with the success of my spontaneous exertion to procure material and respectable aid to Johnson for his very favourite work, *The Lives of the Poets*, I hastened down to Mr. Thrale’s at Streatham, where he now was, that I might insure his being at home next day; and after dinner, when I thought he would receive the good news in the best humour, I announced it

eagerly: ‘I have been at work for you to-day, Sir. I have been with Lord Marchmont. He bade me tell you he has a great respect for you, and will call on you to-morrow at one o’clock, and communicate all he knows about Pope.’—Here I paused, in full expectation that he would be pleased with this intelligence, would praise my active merit, and would be alert to embrace such an offer from a nobleman.

But whether I had shewn an over-exultation, which provoked his spleen, or whether he was seized with a suspicion that I had obtruded him on Lord Marchmont, and humbled him too much, or whether there was any thing more than an unlucky fit of ill-humour, I know not; but, to my surprise, the result was,—

JOHNSON: ‘I shall not be in town to-morrow. I don’t care to know about Pope.’

MRS. THRALE: (surprised as I was, and a little angry) ‘I suppose, Sir, Mr. Boswell thought, that as you are to write Pope’s *Life*, you would wish to know about him.’

JOHNSON: ‘Wish! why yes. If it rained knowledge I’d hold out my hand, but I would not give myself the trouble to go in quest of it.’

Mr. Thrale was uneasy at his unaccountable caprice; and told me, that if I did not take care to bring about a meeting between Lord Marchmont and him, it would never take place, which would be a great pity. I sent a card to his Lordship, to be left at Johnson’s house, acquainting him, that Dr. Johnson could not be in town next day, but would do himself the honour of waiting on him at another time.

Let the most censorious of my readers suppose himself to have a violent fit of the tooth-ache, or to have received a severe stroke on the shin-bone, and when in such a state to be asked a question, and if he has any

candour, he will not be surprised at the answers which Johnson sometimes gave in moments of irritation, which, let me assure them, is exquisitely painful.

But it must not be erroneously supposed that he was, in the smallest degree, careless concerning any work which he undertook, or that he was generally thus peevish. In the following year he had a very agreeable interview with Lord Marchmont, at his Lordship's house; and this very afternoon he soon forgot any fretfulness, and fell into conversation as usual.

When I visited him in March, 1779, he said he expected to be attacked on account of his *Lives of the Poets*. 'However, (said he) I would rather be attacked than unnoticed. For the worst thing you can do to an author is to be silent as to his works. 'An assault upon a town is a bad thing, but starving it is still worse; an assault may be unsuccessful, you may have more men killed than you kill, but if you starve the town, you are sure of victory.'

In 1781 Johnson at last completed his *Lives of the Poets*, of which he gives this account. 'Some time in March I finished *The Lives of the Poets*, which I wrote in my usual way, dilatorily and hastily, unwilling to work, and working with vigour and haste.'

This is the work which of all Dr. Johnson's writings will perhaps be read most generally, and with most pleasure. Philology and biography were his favourite pursuits; and those who lived in intimacy with him, heard him upon all occasions, when there was a proper opportunity, take delight in expatiating upon the various merits of the English poets: upon the niceties of their characters, and the events of their progress through the world which they contributed to illuminate. His mind was so full of that kind of information, and it was so well arranged in his memory, that in performing

what he had undertaken in this way, he had little more to do than to put his thoughts upon paper, exhibiting first each poet's life, and then subjoining a critical examination of his genius and works. But when he began to write, the subject swelled in such a manner, that instead of prefaces to each poet of no more than a few pages, as he had originally intended, he produced an ample, rich, and most entertaining view of them in every respect. The booksellers, justly sensible of the great additional value of the copyright, presented him with another hundred pounds, over and above two hundred, for which his agreement was to furnish such prefaces as he thought fit.

So easy is his style in these *Lives*, that I do not recollect more than three uncommon or learned words; one, when giving an account of the approach of Waller's mortal disease, he says, ‘he found his legs grow *tumid*’; by using the expression his legs *swelled*, he would have avoided this. Another, when he mentions that Pope had *emitted* proposals; when *published* or *issued* would have been more readily understood, and a third, when he calls Orrery and Dr. Delany, writers both undoubtedly *veracious*; when *true*, *honest*, or *faithful*, might have been used.

While the world in general was filled with admiration of Johnson's *Lives of the Poets*, there were narrow circles in which prejudice and resentment were fostered, and from which attacks of different sorts issued against him. [By some violent Whigs he was arraigned of injustice to Milton; by some Cambridge men of depreciating Gray; and his expressing with a dignified freedom what he really thought of George, Lord Lyttelton, gave offence to some of the friends of that nobleman. These minute inconveniences gave not the least disturbance to Johnson. He nobly said, when I

talked to him of the feeble, though shrill, outcry which had been raised, ‘Sir, I considered myself as entrusted with a certain portion of truth. I have given my opinion sincerely; let them show where they think me wrong.’

21

OLIVER GOLDSMITH

DR. OLIVER GOLDSMITH was a native of Ireland, and a contemporary with Mr. Burke at Trinity College, Dublin, but did not then give much promise of future celebrity. He afterwards studied physic at Edinburgh, and upon the Continent; and I have been informed, was enabled to pursue his travels on foot, partly by demanding at universities to enter the lists as a disputant, by which, according to the custom of many of them, he was entitled to the premium of a crown, when luckily for him his challenge was not accepted; so that he *disputed* his passage through Europe. He then came to England, and was employed successively in the capacities of an usher to an academy, a corrector of the press, a reviewer, and a writer for a newspaper. To me and many others it appeared that he studiously copied the manner of Johnson, though, indeed, upon a smaller scale.

No man had the art of displaying with more advantage, as a writer, whatever literary acquisitions he made. ‘*Nihil quod tetigit non ornavit.*’ His mind resembled a fertile, but thin soil. There was a quick, but not a strong vegetation, of whatever chanced to be thrown upon it. No deep root could be struck.

Goldsmith being mentioned;

JOHNSON: 'It is amazing how little Goldsmith knows. He seldom comes where he is not more ignorant than any one else.'

SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS: 'Yet there is no man whose company is more liked.'

JOHNSON: 'To be sure, Sir. When people find a man of the most distinguished abilities as a writer, their inferior while he is with them, it must be highly gratifying to them. What Goldsmith comically says of himself is very true,—he always gets the better when he argues alone, meaning, that he is master of a subject in his study, and can write well upon it; but when he comes into company, grows confused, and unable to talk. Take him as a poet, his *Traveller* is a very fine performance; aye, and so is his *Deserted Village*, were it not sometimes too much the echo of his *Traveller*. Whether, indeed, we take him as a poet,—as a comic writer,—or as an historian, he stands in the first class.' Johnson said 'The misfortune of Goldsmith in conversation is this: he goes on without knowing how he is to get off. His genius is great, but his knowledge is small. As they say of a generous man, it is a pity he is not rich, we may say of Goldsmith, it is a pity he is not knowing. He would not keep his knowledge to himself.'

'Goldsmith should not be for ever attempting to shine in conversation: he has not temper for it, he is so much mortified when he fails. Sir, a game of jokes is composed partly of skill, partly of chance; a man may be beat at times by one who has not the tenth part of his wit. Now Goldsmith's putting himself against another, is like a man laying a hundred to one, who cannot spare the hundred. It is not worth a man's while. A man should not lay a hundred to one, unless

he can easily spare it, though he has a hundred chances for him: he can get but a guinea, and he may lose a hundred. Goldsmith is in this state. When he contends, if he gets the better, it is a very little addition to a man of his literary reputation: if he does not get the better, he is miserably vexed.'

Goldsmith, however, was often very fortunate in his witty contests, even when he entered the lists with Johnson himself. One day Goldsmith said, that he thought he could write a good fable, mentioned the simplicity which that kind of composition requires, and observed, that in most fables the animals introduced seldom talk in character.

'For instance, (said he) the fable of the little fishes, who saw birds fly over their heads, and envying them, petitioned Jupiter to be changed into birds. The skill consists in making them talk like little fishes.'

While he indulged himself in this fanciful reverie, he observed Johnson shaking his sides, and laughing. Upon which he smartly proceeded, 'Why, Dr. Johnson, this is not so easy as you seem to think; for if you were to make little fishes talk, they would talk like WHALES.'

Goldsmith could sometimes take adventurous liberties with him, and escape unpunished. When Goldsmith talked of a project for having a third theatre in London, solely for the exhibition of new plays, Johnson treated it slightly; upon which Goldsmith said, 'Aye, aye, this may be nothing to you, who can now shelter yourself behind the corner of a pension.' Johnson bore this with good-humour.

Dr. Goldsmith said once to Dr. Johnson, that he wished for some additional members to THE LITERARY CLUB, to give it an agreeable variety; for (said he) there can now be nothing new among us: we have travelled over one another's minds.' Johnson seemed a

little angry, and said, 'Sir, you have not travelled over *my* mind, I promise you.'

Once, during a long argument, Goldsmith sat in restless agitation, from a wish to get in and *shine*. Finding himself excluded, he had taken his hat to go away, but remained for some time with it in his hand, like a gamester who, at the close of a long night, lingers for a little while, to see if he can have a favourable opening to finish with success. Once when he was beginning to speak, he found himself overpowered by the loud voice of Johnson, who was at the opposite end of the table, and did not perceive Goldsmith's attempt. Thus disappointed of his wish to obtain the attention of the company, Goldsmith in a passion threw down his hat, looking angrily at Johnson, and exclaiming in a bitter tone, '*Take it*' When Toplady¹ was going to speak, Johnson uttered some sound, which led Goldsmith to think, that he was beginning again, and taking the words from Toplady. Upon which, he seized this opportunity of venting his own envy and spleen, under the pretext of supporting another person: 'Sir, (said he to Johnson) the gentleman has heard you patiently for an hour; pray allow us now to hear him.'

JOHNSON: (sternly) 'Sir, I was not interrupting the gentleman. I was only giving him a signal of my attention. Sir, you are impertinent.' Goldsmith made no reply, but continued in the company for some time.

Johnson and Mr. Langton and I went together to THE CLUB, where we found Mr. Burke, Mr. Garrick, and some other members, and amongst them our friend Goldsmith, who sat silently brooding over Johnson's reprimand to him after dinner. Johnson perceived this, and said aside to some of us, 'I'll make Goldsmith

¹ Another guest.

forgive me'; and then called to him in a loud voice, 'Dr. Goldsmith,—something passed to-day where you and I dined; I ask your pardon.' Goldsmith answered placidly, 'It must be much from you, Sir, that I take ill.' And so at once the difference was over, and they were on as easy terms as ever, and Goldsmith rattled away as usual.

In our way to THE CLUB to-night, when I regretted that Goldsmith would, upon every occasion, endeavour to shine, by which he often exposed himself, Mr. Langton observed, that he was not like Addison, who was content with the fame of his writings, and did not aim also at efficiency in conversation, for which he found himself unfit; and that he said to a lady who complained of his having talked little in company, 'Madam, I have but ninepence in ready money, but I can draw for a thousand pounds.' I observed, that Goldsmith had a great deal of gold in his cabinet, but, not content with that, was always taking out his purse.

JOHNSON: 'Yes, Sir, and that so often an empty purse !'

Goldsmith's incessant desire of being conspicuous in company, was the occasion of his sometimes appearing to such disadvantage as one should hardly have supposed possible in a man of his genius. When talking in a company with fluent vivacity, and, as he flattered himself, to the admiration of all who were present, a German, who sat next him, and perceived Johnson rolling himself, as if about to speak, suddenly stopped him, saying, 'Stay, stay,—Toclor Shonson is going to say something.' This was, no doubt, very provoking, especially to one so irritable as Goldsmith, who frequently mentioned it with strong expressions of indignation.

It may also be observed, that Goldsmith was sometimes content to be treated with an easy familiarity, but, upon occasions, would be consequential and important. An instance of this occurred in a small particular. Johnson had a way of contracting the names of his friends; as Beauclerk, Beau; Boswell, Bozzy; Langton, Lanky; Murphy, Mur; Sheridan,¹ Sherry. I remember one day, when Tom Davies was telling that Dr. Johnson said, 'We are all in labour for a name to *Goldy's* play,' Goldsmith seemed displeased that such a liberty should be taken with his name, and said, 'I have often desired him not to call me *Goldy*.'

Goldsmith's person was short, his countenance coarse and vulgar, his deportment that of a scholar awkwardly affecting the easy gentleman. His desire of imaginary consequence predominated over his attention to truth. When he began to rise into notice, he said he had a brother who was Dean of Durham, a fiction so easily detected, that it is wonderful how he should have been so inconsiderate as to hazard it. He complained one day, in a mixed company, of Lord Camden. 'I met him (said he) at Lord Clare's house in the country, and he took no more notice of me than if I had been an ordinary man.'

The company having laughed heartily, Johnson stood forth in defence of his friend. 'Nay, Gentlemen, (said he) Dr. Goldsmith is in the right. A nobleman ought to have made up to such a man as Goldsmith; and I think it is much against Lord Camden that he neglected him.'

Goldsmith once boasted to me of the power of his pen in commanding money, which I believe was true in a certain degree, though in the instance he gave was by no means correct. He told me that he had sold a

¹ Richard Brinsley Sheridan, the dramatist.

novel for four hundred pounds. This was his *Vicar of Wakefield*. But Johnson informed me, that he had made the bargain for Goldsmith, and the price was sixty pounds. I shall give Johnson's own exact narration:—'I received one morning a message from poor Goldsmith that he was in great distress, and as it was not in his power to come to me, begging that I would come to him as soon as possible I sent him a guinea, and promised to come to him directly. I accordingly went as soon as I was drest, and found that his landlady had arrested him for his rent, at which he was in a violent passion I perceived that he had already changed my guinea, and had got a bottle of Madeira and a glass before him. I put the cork into the bottle, desired he would be calm, and began to talk to him of the means whereby he might be extricated. He then told me that he had a novel ready for the press, which he produced to me. I looked into it, and saw its merit; told the landlady I should soon return; and having gone to a bookseller, sold it for sixty pounds. I brought Goldsmith the money, and he discharged his rent, not without rating his landlady in a high tone for having used him so ill.'

Goldsmith had long a visionary project, that some time or other, when his circumstances should be easier, he would go to Aleppo, in order to acquire a knowledge, as far as might be, of any arts peculiar to the East, and introduce them into Britain. When this was talked of in Dr. Johnson's company, he said, 'Of all men Goldsmith is the most unfit to go out upon such an inquiry; for he is utterly ignorant of such arts as we already possess, and consequently could not know what would be accessions to our present stock of mechanical knowledge. Sir, he would bring home a grinding barrow, which you see in every street in London, and

think that he had furnished a wonderful improvement.'

In July, 1774, Johnson wrote, 'Of poor dear Dr. Goldsmith there is little to be told, more than the papers have made public. He died of a fever, made, I am afraid, more violent by uneasiness of mind. His debts began to be heavy, and all his resources were exhausted. Sir Joshua is of opinion that he owed not less than two thousand pounds. Was ever poet so trusted before? He had raised money and squandered it, by every artifice of acquisition, and folly of expense. But let not his frailties be remembered: he was a very great man.'

'Goldsmith was a man who, whatever he wrote, did it better than any other man could do. He deserved a place in Westminster-Abbey, and every year he lived, would have deserved it better. He had, indeed, been at no pains to fill his mind with knowledge. He transplanted it from one place to another; and it did not settle in his mind; so he could not tell what was in his own books.'

22

DAVID GARRICK

WHEN Garrick had played some little time at Goodman's fields, Johnson and Taylor went to see him perform, and afterwards passed the evening at a tavern with him and old Giffard. Johnson, who was ever depreciating stage-players, after censuring some mistakes in emphasis which Garrick had committed in the course of that night's acting, said, 'The players, Sir, have got a kind of rant, with which they run on, without any regard either to accent or emphasis.'

Both Garrick and Giffard were offended at this sarcasm, and endeavoured to refute it; upon which Johnson rejoined, 'Well, now, I'll give you something to speak, with which you are little acquainted, and then we shall see how just my observation is. That shall be the criterion. Let me hear you repeat the ninth Commandment, "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour."' Both tried at it, and both mistook the emphasis, which should be upon *not* and *false witness*. Johnson put them right, and enjoyed his victory with great glee.

In 1769, I was very sorry that I had not his company with me at the Jubilee, in honour of Shakspeare, at Stratford-upon-Avon, the great poet's native town. Johnson's connection both with Shakspeare and Garrick founded a double claim to his presence; and it would have been highly gratifying to Mr. Garrick. Upon this occasion I particularly lamented that he had not that warmth of friendship for his brilliant pupil, which we may suppose would have had a benignant effect on both. When almost every man of eminence in the literary world was happy to partake in this festival of genius, the absence of Johnson could not but be wondered at and regretted.

I complained that he had not mentioned Garrick in his Preface to Shakspeare, and asked him if he did not admire him.

JOHNSON: 'Yes, as "a poor player, who frets and struts his hour upon the stage";—as a shadow.'

BOSWELL: 'But has he not brought Shakspeare into notice?'

JOHNSON: 'Sir, to allow that, would be to lampoon the age. Many of Shakspeare's plays are the worse for being acted: *Macbeth*, for instance.'

SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS: 'I do not perceive why the

profession of a player should be despised, for the great and ultimate end of all the employments of mankind is to produce amusement. Garrick produces more amusement than any body.'

BOSWELL: 'You say, Dr. Johnson, that Garrick exhibits himself for a shilling. In this respect he is only on a footing with a lawyer who exhibits himself for his fee, and even will maintain any nonsense or absurdity, if the case requires it. Garrick refuses a play or a part which he does not like; a lawyer never refuses.'

JOHNSON: 'Why, Sir, what does this prove? Only that a lawyer is worse. Boswell is now like Jack in *The Tale of a Tub*, who, when he is puzzled by an argument, hangs himself. He thinks I shall cut him down, but I'll let him hang' (laughing vociferously).

SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS: 'Mr. Boswell thinks that the profession of a lawyer being unquestionably honourable, if he can show the profession of a player to be more honourable, he proves his argument.'

A gentleman attacked Garrick for being vain.

JOHNSON: 'No wonder, Sir, that he is vain; a man who is perpetually flattered in every mode that can be conceived. So many bellows have blown the fire, that one wonders he is not by this time become a cinder.'

BOSWELL: 'And such bellows too. Lord Mansfield¹ with his cheeks like to burst; Lord Chatham like an Æolus. I have read such notes from them to him as were enough to turn his head.'

JOHNSON: 'True. When he whom every body else flatters, flatters me, I then am truly happy.'

.

I mentioned that Garrick had related, with pleasant vanity, that a Frenchman who had seen him in one of

¹ See p. 212.

his low characters, exclaimed, '*Comment ! je ne le crois pas. Ce n'est pas Monsieur Garrick, ce Grand Homme !*' Garrick added, with an appearance of grave recollection, 'If I were to begin life again, I think I should not play those low characters.' Upon which I observed, 'Sir, you would be in the wrong; for your great excellence is your variety of playing, your representing so well, characters so different.'

JOHNSON: 'Garrick, Sir, was not in earnest in what he said; for, to be sure, his peculiar excellence is his variety: and, perhaps, there is not any one character which has not been as well acted by somebody else, as he could do it.'

BOSWELL: 'Why, then, Sir, did he talk so ?'

JOHNSON: 'Why, Sir, to make you answer as you did.'

BOSWELL: 'I don't know, Sir, he seemed to dip deep into his mind for the reflection.'

JOHNSON: 'He had not far to dip, Sir: he said the same thing, probably, twenty times before.'

Garrick, when he pleased, could imitate Johnson very exactly. He was always jealous that Johnson spoke lightly of him. I recollect his exhibiting him to me one day, as if saying, 'Davy has some convivial pleasantries about him, but 'tis a futile fellow'; which he uttered perfectly with the tone and air of Johnson.

Mrs. Thrale once praised Garrick's talent for light gay poetry, and dwelt with peculiar pleasure on this line:

I'd smile with the simple, and feed with the poor.

JOHNSON: 'Nay, my dear lady, this will never do. Poor David ! Smile with the simple;—What folly is that ? And who would feed with the poor that can help it ? No, no; let me smile with the wise, and feed with the rich.'

(1775) Dr. Burney having remarked that Mr. Garrick was beginning to look old, he said, 'Why, Sir, you are not to wonder at that, no man's face has had more wear and tear.'

(1776) I observed that Garrick, who was about to quit the stage, would soon have an easier life.

JOHNSON: 'I doubt that, Sir.'

BOSWELL: 'Why, Sir, he will be Atlas with the burthen off his back'

JOHNSON: 'But I know not, Sir, if he will be so steady without his load. However, he should never play any more, but be entirely the gentleman, and not partly the player: he should no longer subject himself to be hissed by a mob, or to be insolently treated by performers, whom he used to rule with a high hand, and who would gladly retaliate.'

BOSWELL: 'I think he should play once a year for the benefit of decayed actors, as it has been said he means to do.'

JOHNSON: 'Alas, Sir ! he will soon be a decayed actor himself.'

(1778) I introduced Mr. Garrick's fame, and his assuming the airs of a great man.

JOHNSON: 'Sir, it is wonderful how *little* Garrick assumes. Consider, Sir: celebrated men, such as you have mentioned, have had their applause at a distance, but Garrick had it dashed in his face, sounded in his ears, and went home every night with the plaudits of a thousand in his *cranium*. Then, Sir, Garrick did not *find*, but *made* his way to the tables, the levées, and almost the bed-chambers of the great. Then, Sir, Garrick had under him a numerous body of people; who, from fear of his power, and hopes of his favour, and admiration of his talents, were constantly submissive to him. And here is a man who has advanced

the dignity of his profession. Garrick has made a player a higher character.'

SCOTT:¹ 'And he is a very sprightly writer, too.'

JOHNSON: 'Yes, Sir; and all this supported by wealth of his own acquisition. If all this had happened to me, I should have had a couple of fellows with long poles walking before me, to knock down every body that stood in the way. Consider, if all this had happened to Cibber or Quin, they'd have jumped over the moon.—Yet Garrick speaks to *us*.' (smiling) "

BOSWELL: 'And Garrick is a very good man, a charitable man.'

JOHNSON: 'Sir, a liberal man. He has given away more money than any man in England. There may be a little vanity mixed; but he has shown that money is not his first object.'

SCOTT: 'I am glad to hear of his liberality. He has been represented as very saving.'

Sir Joshua Reynolds observed, with great truth, that Johnson considered Garrick to be, as it were, his *property*. He would allow no man either to blame or to praise Garrick in his presence, without contradicting him.

(1779) Garrick's death is a striking event; not that we should be surprised with the death of any man who has lived sixty-two years; but because there was a *vivacity* in our late celebrated friend which drove away the thoughts of *death* from any association with *him*. I shall always remember him with affection as well as admiration.

JOHNSON: 'Garrick was a very good man, the cheer-fullest man of his age; a decent liver in a profession which is supposed to give indulgence to licentiousness;

¹ William Scott (1745–1836), son of a Northumberland coal-merchant; English judge; created Baron Stowell (1821).

and a man who gave away, freely, money acquired by himself. He began the world with a great hunger for money, the son of a half-pay officer, bred in a family whose study was to make fourpence do as much as others made fourpence halfpenny do. But, when he had got money, he was very liberal.'

23

WHAT JOHNSON SAID ABOUT:—

QUEEN ELIZABETH

'She had learning enough to have given dignity to a bishop.'

.

POPE

'Sir, a thousand years may elapse before there shall appear another man with a power of versification equal to that of Pope.'

.

SWIFT'S *Gulliver's Travels*

'When once you have thought of big men and little men, it is easy to do all the rest.'

.

SWIFT'S *Conduct of the Allies*

'Sir, his *Conduct of the Allies* is a performance of very little ability.'

'Surely, Sir, (said Dr. Douglas) you must allow it has strong facts.'

JOHNSON: 'Why yes, Sir; but what is that to the merit of the composition? In the Sessions-paper of the Old Bailey there are strong facts. Housebreaking

WHAT JOHNSON SAID ABOUT:—

is a strong fact; robbery is a strong fact; and murder is a *mighty* strong fact; but is great praise due to the historian of those strong facts? No, Sir. Swift has told what he had to tell distinctly enough, but *that* is all. He had to count ten, and he has counted it right.'

.

WOODHOUSE

He spoke with much contempt of the notice taken of Woodhouse, the poetical shoemaker. He said, it was all vanity and childishness: and that such objects were, to those who patronised them, mere mirrors of their own superiority. 'They had better (said he) furnish the man with good implements for his trade, than raise subscriptions for his poems. He may make an excellent shoemaker, but can never make a great poet. A school-boy's exercise may be a pretty thing for a school-boy; but it is no treat for a man.'

.

GRAY

He attacked Gray, calling him a 'dull fellow.'

BOSWELL: 'I understand he was reserved, and might appear dull in company; but surely he was not dull in poetry.'

JOHNSON: 'Sir, he was dull in company, dull in his closet, dull every where. He was dull in a new way, and that made many people think him GREAT. He was a mechanical poet.'

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MRS. PRITCHARD, the actress

'Her playing was quite mechanical. It is wonderful how little mind she had. Sir, she had never read the tragedy of *Macbeth* all through. She no more thought

WHAT JOHNSON SAID ABOUT:—

of the play out of which her part was taken, than a shoemaker thinks of the skin out of which the piece of leather, of which he is making a pair of shoes, is cut.'

.

His friend, TAYLOR

'Taylor was a very sensible acute man, and had a strong mind; he had great activity in some respects, and yet such a sort of indolence, that if you should put a pebble upon his chimney-piece, you would find it there, in the same state, a year afterwards.'

.

THE DUKE OF DEVONSHIRE

'He was not a man of superior abilities, but he was a man strictly faithful to his word. If, for instance, he had promised you an acorn, and none had grown that year in his woods, he would not have contented himself with that excuse; he would have sent to Denmark for it. So unconditional was he in keeping his word; so high as to the point of honour.'

.

JOHN WESLEY

'John Wesley's conversation is good, but he is never at leisure. He is always obliged to go at a certain hour. This is very disagreeable to a man who loves to fold his legs and have out his talk, as I do.'

.

EDMUND BURKE

'If a man were to go by chance at the same time with Burke under a shed, to shun a shower, he would say—"This is an extraordinary man." If Burke should go into a stable to see his horse drest, the ostler would say—"We have had an extraordinary man here."'

.

SAILORS

'No man will be a sailor who has contrivance enough to get himself into a jail, for being in a ship is being in a jail, with the chance of being drowned '

.

SOLDIERS AND SAILORS

'Every man thinks meanly of himself for not having been a soldier, or not having been at sea.'

BOSWELL: 'Lord Mansfield¹ does not.'

JOHNSON: 'Sir, if Lord Mansfield were in the company of General Officers and Admirals who have been in service, he would shrink, he'd wish to creep under the table '

BOSWELL: 'No, he'd think he could *try* them all '

JOHNSON: 'Yes, if he could catch them. but they'd try him much sooner. No, Sir; were Socrates and Charles the Twelfth of Sweden both present in any company, and Socrates to say, "Follow me, and hear a lecture on philosophy"; and Charles, laying his hand on his sword, to say, "Follow me, and dethrone the Czar"; a man would be ashamed to follow Socrates. Sir, the impression is universal; yet it is strange. As to the sailor, when you look down from the quarter deck to the space below, you see the utmost extremity of human misery, such crowding, such filth, such stench !'

BOSWELL: 'Yet sailors are happy.'

JOHNSON: 'They are happy as brutes are happy with a piece of fresh meat,—with the grossest sensuality. But, Sir, the profession of soldiers and sailors has the dignity of danger. Mankind reverence those who have got over fear, which is so general a weakness.'

.

¹ A famous judge.

HUSBANDS AND WIVES

He observed, that a man of sense and education should meet a suitable companion in a wife. It was a miserable thing when the conversation could only be such as, whether the mutton should be boiled or roasted, and probably a dispute about that.

.

SAVAGES

BOSWELL: 'I am well assured that the people of Otaheité, who have the bread tree, the fruit of which serves them for bread, laughed heartily when they were informed of the tedious process necessary with us to have bread,—ploughing, sowing, harrowing, reaping, threshing, grinding, baking.'

JOHNSON: 'Why, Sir, all ignorant savages will laugh when they are told of the advantages of civilized life. Were you to tell men who live without houses, how we pile brick upon brick, and rafter upon rafter, and that after a house is raised to a certain height, a man tumbles off a scaffold, and breaks his neck, he would laugh heartily at our folly in building; but it does not follow that men are better without houses. No, Sir, (holding up a slice of good loaf) this is better than the bread tree.'

.

THE IRISH

'The Irish are a FAIR PEOPLE;—they never speak well of one another.'

.

FRENCH AND ENGLISH

An eminent foreigner, when he was shown the British Museum, was very troublesome with many absurd inquiries.

JOHNSON: 'Now there, Sir, is the difference between

an Englishman and a Frenchman. A Frenchman must be always talking, whether he knows anything of the matter or not; an Englishman is content to say nothing, when he has nothing to say.'

.

ENGLISH RESERVE

'Sir, two men of any other nation who are shown into a room together, at a house where they are both visitors, will immediately find some conversation. But two Englishmen will probably go each to a different window, and remain in obstinate silence. Sir, we as yet do not understand the common rights of humanity.'

.

SCOTLAND AND SCOTCHMEN

'Much may be made of a Scotchman, if he be *caught* young.'

.

'Their learning is like bread in a besieged town: every man gets a little, but no man gets a full meal.'

.

Among some patriotic groans, somebody said, 'Poor England is lost.'

JOHNSON: 'Sir, it is not so much to be lamented that Old England is lost, as that the Scotch have found it.'

.

'One of that nation, who had been a candidate, against whom I had voted, came up to me with a civil salutation. Now, Sir, this is their way. An Englishman would have stomached it, and been sulky, and never have taken further notice of you; but a Scotchman, Sir, though you vote nineteen times against him, will accost you with equal complaisance each time, and the twentieth time, Sir, he will get your vote.'

.

Talking of the success of the Scotch in London, 'You know, Sir, (said he) that no Scotchman publishes a book, or has a play brought upon the stage, but there are five hundred people ready to applaud him.'

I having said that England was obliged to us for gardeners, almost all their good gardeners being Scotchmen,

JOHNSON: 'Why, Sir, that is because gardening is much more necessary amongst you than with us, which makes so many of your people learn it. It is *all* gardening with you. Things which grow wild here, must be cultivated with great care in Scotland. Pray now, (throwing himself back in his chair, and laughing) are you ever able to bring the *sloe* to perfection?'

Mr. Arthur Lee mentioned some Scotch who had taken possession of a barren part in America, and wondered why they should choose it.

JOHNSON: 'Why, Sir, all barrenness is comparative. The *Scotch* would not know it to be barren.'

BOSWELL: 'Come, come, he is flattering the English. You have now been in Scotland, Sir, and say if you did not see meat and drink enough there.'

JOHNSON: 'Why, yes, Sir; meat and drink enough to give the inhabitants sufficient strength to run away from home.'

After musing for some time, he said, 'I wonder how I should have any enemies; for I do harm to nobody.'

BOSWELL: 'In the first place, Sir, you will be pleased to recollect, that you set out with attacking the Scotch; so you got a whole nation for your enemies.'

JOHNSON: 'Why, I own, that by my definition of *oats*¹ I meant to vex them.'

¹ See p. 40.

WHAT JOHNSON SAID ABOUT:—

BOSWELL: 'Pray, Sir, can you trace the cause of your antipathy to the Scotch?'

JOHNSON: 'I cannot, Sir.'

BOSWELL: 'Old Mr. Sheridan says, it was because they sold Charles the First.'

JOHNSON: 'Then, Sir, old Mr. Sheridan has found out a very good reason.'

.

A WOMAN JOURNALIST

It having been mentioned that a certain female political writer, whose doctrines he disliked, had of late become very fond of dress, sat hours together at her toilet, and even put on rouge.

JOHNSON: 'She is better employed at her toilet, than using her pen. It is better she should be reddening her own cheeks, than blackening other people's characters.'

.

THE EXISTENCE OF MATTER

Being in company with a gentleman who thought fit to maintain that nothing exists but as perceived by some mind; when the gentleman was going away, Johnson said to him, 'Pray, Sir, don't leave us; for we may perhaps forget to think of you, and then you will cease to exist.'

.

A DULL ARGUER:

Johnson having argued for some time with a pertinacious gentleman, his opponent, who had talked in a very puzzling manner, happened to say, 'I don't understand you, Sir': upon which Johnson observed, 'Sir, I have found you an argument; but I am not obliged to find you an understanding.'

.

DEFINITIONS

‘Sometimes things may be made darker by definition I see a *cow*; I define her, *Animal quadrupes ruminans cornutum*. But a goat ruminates, and a cow may have no horns. *Cow* is plainer.’
.

THE TRADE IN BOOKS

‘It is, perhaps, not considered through how many hands a book often passes, before it comes into those of the reader; or what part of the profit each hand must retain, as a motive for transmitting to the next.

‘We will call our primary agent in London, Mr. Cadell, who receives our books from us, given them room in his warehouse, and issues them on demand; by him they are sold to Mr. Dilly, a wholesale bookseller, who sends them into the country; and the last seller is the country bookseller. Here are three profits to be paid between the printer and the reader, or in the style of commerce, between the manufacturer and the consumer; and if any of these profits is too penuriously distributed, the process of commerce is interrupted.’
.

PRAISE OF BOOKS

‘There is a great difference between what is said without our being urged to it, and what is said from a kind of compulsion. If I praise a man’s book without being asked my opinion of it, that is honest praise, to which one may trust. But if an author asks me if I like his book, and I give him something like praise, it must not be taken as my real opinion.

‘I have not been troubled for a long time with authors desiring my opinion of their works. I used to be sadly plagued with a man who wrote verses, but who literally had no other notion of a verse, but that

WHAT JOHNSON SAID ABOUT:—

it consisted of ten syllables. *Lay your knife and your fork, across your plate*, was to him a verse:

Lay yōur knife ānd your fōrk, acrōss your plāte.

As he wrote a great number of verses, he sometimes by chance made good ones, though he did not know it.'

EPITAPHS

'The writer of an epitaph should not be considered as saying nothing but what is strictly true Allowance must be made for some degree of exaggerated praise In lapidary inscriptions a man is not upon oath.'

THE BACKS OF BOOKS

No sooner had we made our bow to Mr. Cambridge, in his library, than Johnson ran eagerly to one side, intent on poring over the backs of the books. Mr. Cambridge, upon this, politely said, 'Dr. Johnson, I am going, with your pardon, to accuse myself, for I have the same custom which I perceive you have. But it seems odd that one should have such a desire to look at the backs of books.'

Johnson, ever ready for contest, instantly started from his reverie, wheeled about, and answered, 'Sir, the reason is very plain. Knowledge is of two kinds. We know a subject ourselves, or we know where we can find information upon it. When we enquired into any subject, the first thing we have to do is to know what books have treated of it. This leads us to look at catalogues, and the backs of books in libraries.'

READING

He said, that for general improvement, a man should read whatever his immediate inclination prompts him

to; though, to be sure, if a man has a science to learn, he must regularly and resolutely advance. He added, 'what we read with inclination makes a much stronger impression. If we read without inclination, half the mind is employed in fixing the attention; so there is but one half to be employed on what we read.'

He advised me to have as many books about me as I could; that I might read upon any subject upon which I had a desire for instruction at the time 'What you read *then*, (said he) you will remember; but if you have not a book immediately ready, and the subject moulds in your mind, it is a chance if you again have a desire to study it.'

IDLENESS

A friend one day suggested that it was not wholesome to study soon after dinner.

JOHNSON: 'Ah, Sir, don't give way to such a fancy. At one time of my life, I had taken it into my head that it was not wholesome to study between breakfast and dinner.'

LIES

'There are (said he) inexcusable lies, and consecrated lies. For instance, we are told that on the arrival of the news of the unfortunate battle of Fontenoy, every heart beat, and every eye was in tears. Now we know that no man ate his dinner the worse, but there *should* have been all this concern; and to say there *was*, (smiling) may be reckoned a consecrated lie.'

RIGHT AND WRONG

'The morality of an action depends on the motive from which we act. If I fling half a crown to a beggar

WHAT JOHNSON SAID ABOUT:—

with intention to break his head, and he picks it up and buys victuals with it, the physical effect is good; but, with respect to me, the action is very wrong’

.

FEAR

“The Emperor Charles V, when he read upon the tomb-stone of a Spanish nobleman, “Here lies one who never knew fear,” wittily said, “Then he never snuffed a candle with his fingers.”’

.

LAUGHTER

A writer of deserved eminence being mentioned, Johnson said, ‘Why, Sir, he is a man of good parts, but being originally poor, he has got a love of mean company and low jocularities; a very bad thing, Sir. To laugh is good, as to talk is good. But you ought no more to think it enough if you laugh, than you are to think it enough if you talk. You may laugh in as many ways as you talk; and surely *every* way of talking that is practised cannot be esteemed.’

.

LUXURY

“The truth is, that luxury produces much good. A man gives half a guinea for a dish of green peas. How much gardening does this occasion? how many labourers must the competition to have such things early in the market keep in employment? You will hear it said, very gravely, “Why was not the half-guinea, thus spent in luxury, given to the poor? To how many might it have afforded a good meal!” Alas! has it not gone to the *industrious* poor, whom it is better to support than the *idle* poor? You are much surer that you are doing good when you *pay* money to those who work,

WHAT JOHNSON SAID ABOUT:—

as the recompense of their labour, than when you *give* money merely in charity.’

.

TAVERNS AND INNS

He expatiated on the felicity of England in its taverns and inns, and triumphed over the French for not having, in any perfection, the tavern life. ‘There is no private house, (said he) in which people can enjoy themselves so well, as at a capital tavern. Let there be ever so great plenty of good things, ever so much grandeur, ever so much eloquence, ever so much desire that everybody should be easy; in the nature of things, it cannot be: there must always be some degree of care and anxiety. The master of the house is anxious to entertain his guests; the guests are anxious to be agreeable to him: and no man, but a very impudent dog indeed, can as freely command what is in another man’s house, as if it were his own.

‘Whereas, at a tavern, there is a general freedom from anxiety. You are sure you are welcome and the more noise you make, the more trouble you give, the more good things you call for, the welcomer you are. No servants will attend you with the alacrity which waiters do, who are incited by the prospect of an immediate reward in proportion as they please. No, Sir, there is nothing which has yet been contrived by man, by which so much happiness is produced, as by a good tavern or inn.’

.

PLAYING THE FIDDLE

‘There is nothing, I think, in which the power of art is shown so much as in playing on the fiddle. In all other things we can do something at first. Any man will forge a bar of iron, if you give him a hammer; not

WHAT JOHNSON SAID ABOUT:—

so well as a smith, but tolerably. A man will saw a piece of wood, and make a box, though a clumsy one; but give him a fiddle and a fiddle-stick, and he can do nothing.'

.

TROUBLES

'Do not hope wholly to reason away your troubles; do not feed them with attention, and they will die imperceptibly away. Fix your thoughts upon your business, fill your intervals with company, and sunshine will again break in upon your mind.'

.

EXECUTIONS

'The age is running mad after innovation: all the business of the world is to be done in a new way; men are to be hanged in a new way; Tyburn itself is not safe from the fury of innovation.'

It having been argued that this was an improvement, —'No, Sir, (said he eagerly) it is *not* an improvement: they object that the old method drew together a number of spectators. Sir, executions are intended to draw spectators. If they do not draw spectators, they don't answer their purpose. The old method was most satisfactory to all parties: the public was gratified by a procession; the criminal was supported by it. Why is all this to be swept away?'

.

EQUALITY

'So far is it from being true that men are naturally equal, that no two people can be half an hour together, but one shall acquire an evident superiority over the other.'

.

DRINK

A gentleman having said, 'You know, Sir, drinking drives away care, and makes us forget whatever is disagreeable. Would not you allow a man to drink for that reason?'

JOHNSON: 'Yes, Sir, if he sat next *you*.'

.

FLEAS

A learned gentleman who in the course of conversation wished to inform us of this simple fact, that the counsel upon the circuit at Shrewsbury were much bitten by fleas, took, I suppose, seven or eight minutes in relating it circumstantially. He in a plenitude of phrase told us, that large bales of woollen cloth were lodged in the town-hall;—that by reason of this, fleas nestled there in prodigious numbers; that the lodgings of the counsel were near to the town-hall,—and that those little animals moved from place to place with wonderful agility. Johnson sat in great impatience till the gentleman had finished his tedious narrative, and then burst out, (playfully, however) 'It is a pity, Sir, that you have not seen a lion; for a flea has taken you such a time, that a lion must have served you a twelvemonth.'

THE LAST YEARS

MR. THRACLE'S death in 1781 was a very essential loss to Johnson, who, although he did not foresee all that afterwards happened, was sufficiently convinced that the comforts which Mr. Thracle's family had afforded him, would now in a great measure cease. He, however, continued to shew a kind attention to his widow and children as long as it was acceptable; and he took upon him, with a very earnest concern, the office of one of his executors, the importance of which seemed greater than usual to him, from his circumstances having been always such, that he had scarcely any share in the real business of life. His friends of THE CLUB were in hopes that Mr. Thracle might have made a liberal provision for him for his life, which, as Mr. Thracle left no son, and a very large fortune, it would have been highly to his honour to have done; and, considering Dr. Johnson's age, could not have been of long duration, but he bequeathed him only two hundred pounds, which was the legacy given to each of his executors.

I could not but be somewhat diverted by hearing Johnson talk in a pompous manner of his new office, and particularly of the concerns of the brewery, which it was at last resolved should be sold. When the sale of Thracle's brewery was going forward, Johnson appeared bustling about, with an ink-horn and pen in his button-hole, like an excise-man; and on being asked what he really considered to be the value of the property which was to be disposed of, answered, 'We are not here to sell a parcel of boilers and vats, but the potentiality of growing rich beyond the dreams of avarice.'

The death of Mr. Thracle had made a very material



The Literary Club

From left to right . Langton, Gibbon, Percy, Reynolds, Johnson, Steevens (foreground), Boswell, Chamer

alteration with respect to Johnson's reception in that family. The manly authority of the husband no longer curbed the lively exuberance of the lady; and as her vanity had been fully gratified, by having the Colossus of Literature attached to her for many years, she gradually became less assiduous to please him. Whether her attachment to him was already divided by another object, I am unable to ascertain; but it is plain that Johnson's penetration was alive to her neglect, or forced attention; for on the 6th of October this year, we find him making a 'parting use of the library' at Streatham.

On Friday, March 21, 1783, having arrived in London the night before, I was glad to find him at Mrs. Thrale's house, in Argyll-street, appearances of friendship between them being still kept up. I was shown into his room, and after the first salutations he said, 'I am glad you are come. I am very ill.' He looked pale, and was distressed with a difficulty of breathing; but after the common inquiries, he assumed his usual strong, animated style of conversation.

He sent a message to acquaint Mrs. Thrale that I was arrived. I had not seen her since her husband's death. She soon appeared, and favoured me with an invitation to stay to dinner, which I accepted. There was no other company but herself and three of her daughters, Dr. Johnson, and I. She, too, said she was very glad I was come, for she was going to Bath, and should have been sorry to leave Dr. Johnson before I came. This seemed to be attentive and kind; and I who had not been informed of any change, imagined all to be as well as formerly. He was little inclined to talk at dinner, and went to sleep after it; but when he joined us in the drawing-room, he seemed revived, and was again himself.

Next day, I found him still at Mrs. Thrale's, but he told me that he was to go to his own house in the afternoon.

On Friday, May 29, being to set out for Scotland next morning, I passed a part of the day with him in more than usual earnestness, as his health was in a more precarious state than at any time when I had parted from him. He embraced me, and gave me his blessing, as usual when I was leaving him for any length of time. I walked from his door, to-day, with a fearful apprehension of what might happen before I returned.

My anxious apprehensions at parting with him this year, proved to be but too well founded; for not long afterwards he had a dreadful stroke of the palsy.

Such was the general vigour of his constitution, that he recovered from this alarming and severe attack with wonderful quickness, so that in July he was able to make a visit to Mr. Langton at Rochester, where he passed about a fortnight, and made little excursions as easily as at any time of his life. In August he went as far as the neighbourhood of Salisbury, to Heale, the seat of William Bowes, Esq. While he was here, he had a letter from Dr. Brocklesby, acquainting him of the death of Mrs. Williams, which affected him a good deal.

His fortitude and patience met with severe trials during this year. The stroke of palsy has been related; but he was also afflicted with the gout, and was besides troubled with a complaint which not only was attended with immediate inconvenience, but threatened him with an operation from which most men would shrink. Happily, the complaint abated without his being put to the torture of amputation.

In the end of this year he was seized with a spasmodic asthma of such violence, that he was confined

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to the house in great pain, and there came upon him at the same time that oppressive and fatal disease, a dropsy. It was a very severe winter, which probably aggravated his complaints, and the solitude in which Mr. Levett¹ and Mrs. Williams had left him, rendered his life very gloomy. Mrs. Desmoulins, who still lived, was herself so very ill, that she could contribute very little to his relief.

On Wednesday, May 5, 1784, I arrived in London, and next morning had the pleasure to find Dr. Johnson greatly recovered. I but just saw him, for a coach was waiting to carry him to Islington, where he went sometimes for the benefit of good air.

On May 16, I found him alone, he talked of Mrs. Thrale with much concern, saying, 'Sir, she has done every thing wrong, since Thrale's bridle was off her neck.'

He had now a great desire to go to Oxford, as his first jaunt after his illness; we talked of it for some days, and I had promised to accompany him. He was fretful and impatient to-night, (May 30) because I did not at once agree to go with him on Thursday. When I considered how ill he had been, and what allowance should be made for the influence of sickness upon his temper, I resolved to indulge him, though with some inconvenience to myself, as I wished to attend the musical meeting in honour of Handel, in Westminster-Abbey, on the following Saturday.

On Thursday, June 3, the Oxford post-coach took us up in the morning at Bolt-court. The other two passengers were Mrs. Beresford and her daughter, two very agreeable ladies from America; they were going to Worcestershire, where they then resided. Frank had been sent by his master, the day before, to take

¹ Died early in 1782.

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places for us; and I found, from the way-bill, that Dr. Johnson had made our names be put down. Mrs. Beresford, who had read it, whispered me, 'Is this the great Dr. Johnson?' I told her it was, so she was then prepared to listen. As she soon happened to mention in a voice so low that Johnson did not hear it, that her husband had been a member of the American Congress, I cautioned her to beware of introducing that subject, as she must know how very violent Johnson was against the people of that country.

I was surprised at his talking without reserve in the public post-coach of the state of his affairs; 'I have (said he) about the world I think above a thousand pounds, which I intend shall afford Frank an annuity of seventy pounds a year.'

At the inn where we stopped he was exceedingly dissatisfied with some roast mutton which we had for dinner. He scolded the waiter, saying, 'It is as bad as bad can be: it is ill-fed, ill-killed, ill-kept, and ill-drest.'

He bore the journey very well, and seemed to feel himself elevated as he approached Oxford. Frank came in the heavy coach, in readiness to attend him; and we were received with the most polite hospitality at the house of his old friend, Dr. Adams. He soon dispatched the inquiries which were made about his illness and recovery, by a short and distinct narrative; and then, assuming a gay air, repeated from Swift,—

'Nor think on our approaching ills,
And talk of spectacles and pills.'

I fulfilled my intention by going to London, and returned to Oxford on Wednesday, the 9th of June, when I was happy to find myself again in the same agreeable circle at Pembroke College, with the

comfortable prospect of making some stay. Johnson welcomed my return with more than ordinary glee.

On Friday, June 11, Dr. Johnson and I went in Dr. Adams's coach to dine with Dr. Nowell at his beautiful villa at Iffley, on the banks of the Isis, about two miles from Oxford. While we were upon the road, I had the resolution to ask Johnson whether he thought that the roughness of his manner had been an advantage or not, and if he would not have done more good if he had been more gentle. I proceeded to answer myself thus: 'Perhaps it has been of advantage, as it has given weight to what you said: you could not, perhaps, have talked with such authority without it.'

JOHNSON: 'No, Sir; I have done more good as I am. Obscenity and impiety have always been repressed in my company.'

BOSWELL: 'True, Sir Yet many people who might have been benefited by your conversation, have been frightened away. A worthy friend of ours has told me, that he has often been afraid to talk to you.'

JOHNSON: 'Sir, he need not have been afraid, if he had any thing rational to say. If he had not, it was better he did not talk.'

On Sunday, June 13, we talked of whether it was allowable at any time to depart from truth.

JOHNSON: 'The general rule is, that truth should never be violated. There must, however, be some exceptions. If, for instance, a murderer should ask you which way a man has gone, you may tell him what is not true, because you are under a previous obligation not to betray a man to a murderer. But I deny the lawfulness of telling a lie to a sick man for fear of alarming him. You have no business with consequences; you are to tell the truth. Besides, you are not sure what effect your telling him that he is in danger may

have. It may bring his distemper to a crisis, and that may cure him. Of all lying, I have the greatest abhorrence of this, because I believe it has been frequently practised on myself.'

In the morning of Tuesday, June 15, we talked of a printed letter from the Reverend Herbert Croft, to a young gentleman who had been his pupil, in which he advised him to read to the end of whatever books he should begin to read.

JOHNSON: 'This is surely a strange advice; you may as well resolve that whatever men you happen to get acquainted with, you are to keep to them for life. A book may be good for nothing, or there may be only one thing in it worth knowing; are we to read it all through? These Voyages, (pointing to the three large volumes of *Voyages to the South Sea*, which were just come out) *who* will read them through? A man had better work his way before the mast, than read them through; they will be eaten by rats and mice, before they are read through. There can be little entertainment in such books; one set of savages is like another.'

BOSWELL. 'I do not think the people of Otaheité can be reckoned savages.'

JOHNSON: 'Don't cant in defence of savages.'

BOSWELL: 'They have the art of navigation.'

JOHNSON: 'A dog or a cat can swim.'

BOSWELL: 'They carve very ingeniously.'

JOHNSON: 'A cat can scratch, and a child with a nail can scratch.'

On Wednesday, June 16, Dr. Johnson and I returned to London.

On Tuesday, June 22, I dined with him at THE LITERARY CLUB, the last time of his being in that respectable society. He looked ill, but had such a

manly fortitude, that he did not trouble the company with melancholy complaints. They all showed evident marks of kind concern about him, with which he was much pleased, and he exerted himself to be as entertaining as his indisposition allowed him.

The anxiety of his friends to preserve so estimable a life, made them plan for him a retreat from the severity of a British winter, to the mild climate of Italy. This scheme was at last brought to a serious resolution at General Paoli's, where I had often talked of it. One essential matter was necessary to be previously settled, which was obtaining such an addition to his income, as would be sufficient to enable him to defray the expense in a manner becoming the first literary character of a great nation. The person to whom I thought I should apply to negotiate this business, was the Lord Chancellor, Edward, Lord Thurlow, because I knew that he highly valued Johnson, and that Johnson highly valued his Lordship. After his Lordship was advanced to the seals, he said of him, 'I would prepare myself for no man in England but Lord Thurlow. When I am to meet with him, I should wish to know a day before.'

Though personally very little known to his Lordship, I wrote to him, stating the case, and requesting his good offices for Dr. Johnson.

On Friday, June 25, I dined with Johnson at General Paoli's. There was a variety of dishes much to his taste, of all which he seemed to me to eat so much, that I was afraid he might be hurt by it; and I whispered to the General my fear, and begged him not to press him. 'Alas! (said the General) see how very ill he looks; he can live but a very short time. Would you refuse any slight gratifications to a man under sentence of death?'

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On Monday, June 28, I had the honour to receive from the Lord Chancellor the following letter:—

‘TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

‘SIR,—I should have answered your letter immediately, if (being much engaged when I received it) I had not put it in my pocket, and forgot to open it till this morning.

‘I am much obliged to you for the suggestion; and I will adopt and press it as far as I can. The best argument, I am sure, and I hope it is not likely to fail, is Dr. Johnson’s merit. But it will be necessary, if I should be so unfortunate as to miss seeing you, to converse with Sir Joshua on the sum it will be proper to ask,—in short, upon the means of setting him out. It would be a reflection on us all, if such a man should perish for want of the means to take care of his health.

‘Yours, &c.’

‘THURLOW.’

This letter gave me a very high satisfaction; I next day went and shewed it to Sir Joshua Reynolds, who was exceedingly pleased with it. He thought that I should now communicate the negotiation to Dr. Johnson, who might afterwards complain if the attention with which he had been honoured, should be too long concealed from him. I intended to set out for Scotland next morning; but Sir Joshua cordially insisted that I should stay another day, that Johnson and I might dine with him, that we three might talk of his Italian tour, and, as Sir Joshua expressed himself, ‘have it all out.’ I hastened to Johnson, and was told by him that he was rather better to-day.

BOSWELL: ‘I am very anxious about you, Sir, and

particularly that you should go to Italy for the winter, which I believe is your own wish.'

JOHNSON: 'It is, Sir.'

BOSWELL: 'You have no objection, I presume, but the money it would require.'

JOHNSON: 'Why, no, Sir.'

Upon which I gave him a particular account of what had been done, and read to him the Lord Chancellor's letter. He listened with much attention; then warmly said, 'This is taking prodigious pains about a man.'

'O, Sir! (said I, with most sincere affection) your friends would do every thing for you.'

He paused, grew more and more agitated, till tears started into his eyes, and he exclaimed with fervent emotion, 'God bless you all.' I was so affected that I also shed tears.

On Wednesday, June 30, the friendly, confidential dinner with Sir Joshua Reynolds took place, no other company being present. Had I known that this was the last time that I should enjoy in this world the conversation of a friend whom I so much respected, and from whom I derived so much instruction and entertainment, I should have been deeply affected. When I now look back to it, I am vexed that a single word should have been forgotten.

Both Sir Joshua and I were so sanguine in our expectations, that we expatiated with confidence on the liberal provision which we were sure would be made for him, conjecturing whether munificence would be displayed in one large donation, or in an ample increase of his pension. He himself caught so much of our enthusiasm, as to allow himself to suppose it not impossible that our hopes might in one way or other be realised.

Sir Joshua and I endeavoured to flatter his imagination

with agreeable prospects of happiness in Italy. 'Nay, (said he) I must not expect much of that; when a man goes to Italy merely to feel how he breathes the air, he can enjoy very little.'

I accompanied him in Sir Joshua's coach to the entry of Bolt-court. He asked me whether I would not go with him to his house, I declined it, from an apprehension that my spirits would sink. We bade adieu to each other affectionately in the carriage. When he had got down upon the foot-pavement, he called out, 'Fare you well;' and without looking back, sprang away with a kind of pathetic briskness, which seemed to indicate a struggle to conceal uneasiness, and impressed me with a foreboding of our long, long separation.

Soon after this time, Dr. Johnson had the mortification of being informed by Mrs. Thrale, that she was actually going to marry Signor Piozzi, an Italian music-master. He endeavoured to prevent it; but in vain.

It must be admitted that Johnson derived a considerable portion of happiness from the comforts and elegancies which he enjoyed in Mr. Thrale's family; but Mrs. Thrale assures us he was indebted for these to her husband alone, who certainly respected him sincerely. Her words are,—'*Veneration for his virtue, reverence for his talents, delight in his conversation, and habitual endurance of a yoke my first husband put upon me, and of which he contentedly bore his share for sixteen or seventeen years, made me go on so long with Mr. Johnson; but the perpetual confinement I will own to have been terrifying in the first years of our friendship, and irksome in the last; nor could I pretend to support it without help, when my coadjutor was no more.*'

Alas! how different is this from the declarations

which I have heard Mrs Thrale make in his life-time, without a single murmur against any peculiarities, or against any one circumstance which attended their intimacy.

By a letter from Sir Joshua Reynolds I was informed, that the Lord Chancellor had called on him, and acquainted him that the application had not been successful. Upon this unexpected failure I abstain from presuming to make any remarks, or to offer any conjectures.

25

CURTAIN

MY readers are now, at last, to behold SAMUEL JOHNSON preparing himself for that doom, from which the most exalted powers afford no exemption to man. Death had always been to him an object of terror, so that, though by no means happy, he still clung to life with an eagerness at which many have wondered.

Dr. Heberden, Dr. Brocklesby, Dr. Warren, and Dr. Butter, physicians, generously attended him, without accepting any fees, as did Mr. Cruikshank, surgeon, and all that could be done from professional skill and ability, was tried, to prolong a life so truly valuable.

About eight or ten days before his death, when Dr. Brocklesby paid him his morning visit, he seemed very low and desponding, and said, 'I have been as a dying man all night.'

Having no near relations, it had been for some time Johnson's intention to make a liberal provision for his

faithful servant, Mr. Francis Barber, whom he looked upon as particularly under his protection, and whom he had all along treated truly as an humble friend. Having asked Dr. Brocklesby what would be a proper annuity to a favourite servant, and being answered that it must depend on the circumstances of the master; and that, in the case of a nobleman, fifty pounds a year was considered as an adequate reward for many years' faithful service; 'Then (said Johnson) shall I be *nobilissimus*, for I mean to leave Frank seventy pounds a year, and I desire you to tell him so.'

The consideration of numerous papers of which he was possessed, seems to have struck Johnson's mind with a sudden anxiety, and as they were in great confusion, it is much to be lamented that he had not entrusted some faithful and discreet person with the care and selection of them; instead of which, he in a precipitate manner burnt large masses of them, with little regard, as I apprehend, to discrimination. Two very valuable articles, I am sure, we have lost, which were two quarto volumes, containing a full, fair, and most particular account of his own life, from his earliest recollection. I owned to him, that having accidentally seen them, I had read a great deal in them; and apologising for the liberty I had taken, asked him if I could help it. He placidly answered, 'Why, Sir, I do not think you could have helped it.' I said that I had, for once in my life, felt half an inclination to commit theft. It had come into my mind to carry off those two volumes, and never see him more. Upon my inquiring how this would have affected him, 'Sir, (said he) I believe I should have gone mad.'

During his last illness, Johnson experienced the steady and kind attachment of his numerous friends. Nobody was more attentive to him than Mr. Langton,

to whom he tenderly said, '*Te teneam moriens deficiente manu.*' Mr. Langton informs me, that one day he found Mr. Burke and four or five more friends sitting with Johnson. Mr. Burke said to him, 'I am afraid, Sir, such a number of us may be oppressive to you.' 'No, Sir, (said Johnson) it is not so; and I must be in a wretched state, indeed, when your company would not be a delight to me.' Mr. Burke, in a tremulous voice, expressive of being very tenderly affected, replied, 'My dear Sir, you have always been too good to me.' Immediately afterwards he went away. This was the last circumstance in the acquaintance of these two eminent men.

Amidst the melancholy clouds which hung over the dying Johnson, his characteristical manner shewed itself on different occasions.

When Dr. Warren, in the usual style, hoped he was better, his answer was, 'No, Sir; you cannot conceive with what acceleration I advance towards death.'

A man whom he had never seen before, was employed one night to sit up with him. Being asked next morning how he liked his attendant, his answer was, 'Not at all, Sir: the fellow's an idiot, he is as awkward as a turn-spit when first put into the wheel, and as sleepy as a dormouse.'

Mr. Windham having placed a pillow conveniently to support him, he thanked him for his kindness, and said, 'That will do—all that a pillow can do.'

As he opened a note which his servant brought him, he said, 'An odd thought strikes me: we shall receive no letters in the grave.'

He requested three things of Sir Joshua Reynolds:—To forgive him thirty pounds which he had borrowed of him; to read the Bible; and never to use his pencil on a Sunday. Sir Joshua readily acquiesced.

Johnson, with that native fortitude, which, amidst all his bodily distress and mental sufferings, never forsook him, asked Dr. Brocklesby, as a man in whom he had confidence, to tell him plainly whether he could recover. 'Give me (said he) a direct answer.' The Doctor having first asked him if he could bear the whole truth, which way soever it might lead, and being answered that he could, declared that, in his opinion, he could not recover without a miracle, 'Then (said Johnson) I will take no more physic, not even my opiates; for I have prayed that I may render up my soul to God unclouded.'

From the time that he was certain his death was near, he appeared to be perfectly resigned, and was seldom or never fretful or out of temper.

On Monday, the 13th of December, a Miss Morris, daughter to a particular friend of his, called, and said to Francis, that she begged to be permitted to see the Doctor, that she might earnestly request him to give her his blessing. Francis went into his room, followed by the young lady, and delivered the message. The Doctor turned himself in the bed, and said, 'God bless you, my dear!' These were the last words he spoke. His difficulty of breathing increased till about seven o'clock in the evening, when Mr. Barber and Mrs. Desmoulins, who were sitting in the room, observing that the noise he made in breathing had ceased, went to the bed, and found he was dead.

A few days before his death, he had asked Sir John Hawkins, as one of his executors, where he should be buried; and on being answered, 'Doubtless, in Westminster-Abbey,' seemed to feel a satisfaction, very natural to a poet. Accordingly, upon Monday, December 20, his remains were deposited in that noble and renowned edifice. His school-fellow, Dr. Taylor,

performed the mournful office of reading the burial service.

I find myself unable to express all that I felt upon the loss of such a 'Guide, philosopher, and friend.' I shall, therefore, not say one word of my own, but adopt those of an eminent friend: 'He has made a chasm which not only nothing can fill up, but which nothing has a tendency to fill up. Johnson is dead. Let us go to the next best: there is nobody; no man can be said to put you in mind of Johnson.'

26

LOOKING BACK

JOHNSON'S figure was large and well formed, and his countenance of the cast of an ancient statue, yet his appearance was rendered strange and somewhat uncouth, by convulsive cramps, by the scars of that distemper which it was once imagined the royal touch could cure, and by a slovenly mode of dress. He had the use of only one eye, yet so much does mind govern and even supply the deficiency of organs, that his visual perceptions, as far as they extended, were uncommonly quick and accurate. So morbid was his temperament, that he never knew the natural joy of a free and vigorous use of his limbs: when he rode, he had no command or direction of his horse, but was carried as if in a balloon.

His peculiar march is thus described: 'When he walked the streets, what with the constant roll of his head, and the concomitant motion of his body, he

appeared to make his way by that motion, independent of his feet.'

That he was often much stared at while he advanced in this manner, may easily be believed; but it was not safe to make sport of one so robust as he was. Mr. Langton saw him one day, in a fit of absence, by a sudden start, drive the load off a porter's back, and walk forward briskly, without being conscious of what he had done. The porter was very angry, but stood still, and eyed the huge figure with much earnestness, till he was satisfied that his wisest course was to be quiet, and take up his burthen again

Sir Joshua Reynolds wrote. 'Those motions or tricks of Dr. Johnson are improperly called convulsions. He could sit motionless, when he was told so to do, as well as any other man, my opinion is that it proceeded from a habit which he had indulged himself in, of accompanying his thoughts with certain untoward actions, and those actions always appeared to me as if they were meant to reprobate some part of his past conduct. Whenever he was not engaged in conversation, such thoughts were sure to rush into his mind; and, for this reason, any company, any employment whatever, he preferred to being alone. The great business of his life (he said) was to escape from himself, this disposition he considered as the disease of his mind which nothing cured but company.

'One instance of his absence and particularity, as it is characteristic of the man, may be worth relating. When he and I took a journey together into the West, we visited the late Mr. Banks, of Dorsetshire; the conversation turning upon pictures, which Johnson could not well see, he retired to a corner of the room, stretching out his right leg as far as he could reach before him, then bringing up his left leg, and stretching his

right still further on. The old gentleman observing him, went up to him, and in a very courteous manner assured him, that though it was not a new house, the flooring was perfectly safe. The Doctor started from his reverie, like a person waked out of his sleep, but spoke not a word.'

Mr. Hogarth came one day to see Mr. Richardson, author of *Clarissa*, soon after the execution of Dr. Cameron, for having taken arms for the house of Stuart in 1745-6, and being a warm partisan for George the Second, he observed to Richardson, that certainly there must have been some very unfavourable circumstances lately discovered in this particular case, which had induced the King to approve of an execution for rebellion so long after the time when it was committed, as this had the appearance of putting a man to death in cold blood, and was very unlike his Majesty's usual clemency.

While he was talking, he perceived a person standing at a window in the room, shaking his head, and rolling himself about in a strange, ridiculous manner. He concluded that he was an idiot, whom his relations had put under the care of Mr. Richardson, as a very good man. To his great surprise, however, this figure stalked forwards to where he and Mr. Richardson were sitting, and all at once took up the argument, and burst out into an invective against George the Second, as one, who, upon all occasions, was unrelenting and barbarous; mentioning many instances, particularly, that when an officer of high rank had been acquitted by a court martial, George the Second had, with his own hand, struck his name off the list. In short, he displayed such a power of eloquence, that Hogarth looked at him with astonishment, and actually imagined that this idiot had been at the moment inspired. Neither

Hogarth nor Johnson were made known to each other at this interview.

Miss Hunter, a niece of his friend Christopher Smart, when a very young girl, struck by his extraordinary motions, said to him, 'Pray, Dr. Johnson, why do you make such strange gestures?' 'From bad habit,' he replied. 'Do you, my dear, take care to guard against bad habits.'

'When Madame de Boufflers was first in England, (said Beauclerk) she was desirous to see Johnson. I accordingly went with her to his chambers in the Temple, where she was entertained with his conversation for some time. When our visit was over, she and I left him, and were got into Inner-Temple-lane, when all at once I heard a noise like thunder. This was occasioned by Johnson, who, it seems, upon a little recollection, had taken it into his head that he ought to have done the honours of his literary residence to a foreign lady of quality, and eager to shew himself a man of gallantry, was hurrying down the stair-case in violent agitation. He overtook us before we reached the Temple-gate, and brushing in between me and Madame de Boufflers, seized her hand, and conducted her to her coach. His dress was a rusty brown morning suit, a pair of old shoes by way of slippers, a little shrivelled wig sticking on the top of his head, and the sleeves of his shirt and the knees of his breeches hanging loose. A considerable crowd of people gathered round, and were not a little struck by this singular appearance.'

The late Alexander, Earl of Eglington, who loved wit more than wine, and men of genius more than sycophants, had a great admiration of Johnson; but from the remarkable elegance of his own manners, was, perhaps, too delicately sensible of the roughness which

sometimes appeared in Johnson's behaviour. One evening, when his Lordship did me the honour to sup at my lodgings with Dr. Robertson and several other men of literary distinction, he regretted that Johnson had not been educated with more refinement, and lived more in polished society. 'No, no, my Lord, (said Signor Baretti) do with him what you would, he would always have been a bear.' 'True, (answered the Earl, with a smile) but he would have been a *dancing* bear.'

To obviate all the reflections which have gone round the world to Johnson's prejudice, by applying to him the epithet of a *bear*, let me impress upon my readers a just and happy saying of my friend Goldsmith, who knew him well: 'Johnson, to be sure, has a roughness in his manner; but no man alive has a more tender heart. *He has nothing of the bear but his skin.*'

One day Johnson sent for me to help him choose a pair of silver buckles, as those he had were too small. Probably this alteration in dress was suggested by Mrs. Thrale, by associating with whom, his external appearance was much improved. He got better clothes; and the dark colour, from which he never deviated, was enlivened by metal buttons. His wigs, too, were much better; and during their travels in France, he was furnished with a Paris-made wig, of handsome construction. This choosing of silver buckles was a negotiation: 'Sir, (said he) I will not have the ridiculous large ones now in fashion; and I will give no more than a guinea for a pair.' Such were the *principles* of the business and, after some examination, he was fitted.

His liberality in giving his money to persons in distress was extraordinary. Yet there lurked about him a propensity to paltry saving. One day I owned to him that 'I was occasionally troubled with a fit of *narrowness*.' 'Why, Sir, (said he) so am I. *But*

I do not tell it. He has now and then borrowed a shilling of me; and when I asked for it again, seemed to be rather out of humour. A droll circumstance once occurred: as if he meant to reprimand my minute exactness as a creditor, he thus addressed me,—‘Boswell, *lend me sixpence—not to be repaid.*’

The Rev. Dr. Maxwell writes:—

‘His general mode of life, during my acquaintance, seemed to be pretty uniform. About twelve o’clock I commonly visited him, and frequently found him in bed, or declaiming over his tea, which he drank very plentifully. He generally had a levée of morning visitors, chiefly men of letters, Hawkesworth, Goldsmith, Murphy, Langton, Steevens, Beauclerk, &c, &c., and sometimes learned ladies. He seemed to me to be considered as a kind of public oracle, whom every body thought they had a right to visit and consult, and doubtless they were well rewarded.

‘I never could discover how he found time for his compositions. He declaimed all the morning, then went to dinner at a tavern, where he commonly stayed late, and then drank his tea at some friend’s house, over which he loitered a great while, but seldom took supper. I fancy he must have read and wrote chiefly in the night, for I can scarcely recollect that he ever refused going with me to a tavern, and he often went to Ranelagh, which he deemed a place of innocent recreation.

‘He frequently gave all the silver in his pocket to the poor, who watched him between his house and the tavern where he dined. He walked the streets at all hours, and said he was never robbed, for the rogues knew he had little money, nor had the appearance of having much.’

He feared death, but he feared nothing else, not

even what might occasion death. One day, at Mr. Beauchlerk's house in the country, when two large dogs were fighting, he went up to them, and beat them till they separated; and at another time, when told of the danger there was that a gun might burst if charged with many balls, he put in six or seven, and fired it off against the wall.

Mr. Langton told me that when they were swimming together near Oxford, he cautioned Dr. Johnson against a pool, which was reckoned particularly dangerous, upon which Johnson directly swam into it.

He told me himself that one night he was attacked in the street by four men, to whom he would not yield, but kept them all at bay, till the watch came up, and carried both him and them to the round-house.

In the playhouse at Lichfield, as Mr. Garrick informed me, Johnson having for a moment quitted a chair which was placed for him between the side-scenes, a gentleman took possession of it, and when Johnson on his return civilly demanded his seat, rudely refused to give it up; upon which Johnson laid hold of it, and tossed him and the chair into the pit.

Foote, who so successfully revived the old comedy, by exhibiting living characters, had resolved to imitate Johnson on the stage, expecting great profits from his ridicule of so celebrated a man. Johnson being informed of his intention, and being at dinner at Mr. Thomas Davies's the bookseller, from whom I had the story, he asked Mr. Davies 'what was the common price of an oak stick;' and being answered sixpence, 'Why then, Sir, (said he) give me leave to send your servant to purchase me a shilling one. I'll have a double quantity; for I am told Foote means to *take me off*, as he calls it, and I am determined the fellow shall not do it with impunity.' Davies took care to

acquaint Foote of this, which effectually checked the wantonness of the mimic.

I shall never forget the indulgence with which Johnson treated Hodge, his cat, for whom he himself used to go out and buy oysters, lest the servants having that trouble should take a dislike to the poor creature. I am, unluckily, one of those who have an antipathy to a cat, so that I am uneasy when in the room with one; and I own, I frequently suffered a good deal from the presence of this same Hodge. I recollect him one day scrambling up Dr. Johnson's breast, apparently with much satisfaction, while my friend, smiling and half-whistling, rubbed down his back, and pulled him by the tail, and when I observed he was a fine cat, saying, 'Why, yes, Sir, but I have had cats whom I liked better than this,' and then, as if perceiving Hodge to be out of countenance, adding, 'but he is a very fine cat, a very fine cat indeed.'

Johnson's laugh was as remarkable as any circumstance in his manner. It was a kind of good humoured growl. Tom Davies described it drolly enough: 'He laughs like a rhinoceros.'

A certain person being struck, or rather stunned by his voice and manner, when he was afterwards asked what he thought of him, answered, 'He's a tremendous companion.'

He sometimes could not bear being teased with questions. I was once present when a gentleman asked so many as, 'What did you do, Sir?' 'What did you say, Sir?' that he at last grew enraged, and said, 'I will not be put to the *question*. Don't you consider, Sir, that these are not the manners of a gentleman? I will not be baited with *what*, and *why*; what is this? what is that? why is a cow's tail long? why is a fox's tail bushy?' The gentleman, who was a good deal

out of countenance, said 'Why, Sir, you are so good, that I venture to trouble you.'

JOHNSON: 'Sir, my being so *good* is no reason why you should be so *ill*.'

Johnson once observed to me, 'Tom Tyers described me the best: "Sir, (said he) you are like a ghost: you never speak till you are spoken to." '

It was well observed by Dr. Percy, 'The conversation of Johnson is strong and clear, and may be compared to an antique statue, where every vein and muscle is distinct and bold. Ordinary conversation resembles an inferior cast.'

Johnson's attention to precision and clearness in expression was very remarkable. He disapproved of parentheses; and I believe in all his voluminous writings, not half a dozen of them will be found. He never used the phrases *the former* and *the latter*, having observed, that they often occasioned obscurity; he therefore contrived to construct his sentences so as not to have occasion for them, and would even rather repeat the same words, in order to avoid them.

Nothing is more common than to mistake surnames when we hear them carelessly uttered for the first time. To prevent this, he used not only to pronounce them slowly and distinctly, but to take the trouble of spelling them; a practice which I have often followed, and which I wish were general.

When in good humour he would talk of his own writings with a wonderful frankness and candour, and would even criticise them with the closest severity. One day, having read over one of his *Ramblers*, Mr. Langton asked him, how he liked that paper; he shook his head, and answered, 'too wordy.' At another time, when one was reading his tragedy of *Irene* to a company at a house in the country, he left the room; and somebody

having asked him the reason of this, he replied, 'Sir, I thought it had been better.'

He seemed to take a pleasure in speaking in his own style, for when he had carelessly missed it, he would repeat the thought, translated into it. Talking of the Comedy of *The Rehearsal*, he said, 'It has not wit enough to keep it sweet.' This was easy; he therefore caught himself, and pronounced a more round sentence; 'It has not vitality enough to preserve it from putrefaction.'

I once read him a letter which Lord Monboddo had written to me upon the style of his *Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland*. His lordship praised the very fine passage upon landing at Icolmkill;¹ but he disapproved of the richness of Johnson's language, and of his frequent use of metaphorical expressions.

JOHNSON: 'Why, Sir, this criticism would be just, if in my style superfluous words, or words too big for the thoughts, could be pointed out; but this I do not believe can be done.'

His noble friend, Lord Ellibank, well observed, that if a great man procured an interview with Johnson, and did not wish to see him more, it showed a mere idle curiosity, and a wretched want of relish for extraordinary powers of mind. Mrs. Thrale justly and wittily accounted for such conduct by saying, that Johnson's conversation was by much too strong for a person accustomed to obsequiousness and flattery; it was *mustard in a young child's mouth*!

As he was general and unconfined in his studies, he cannot be considered as master of any one particular science; but he had accumulated a vast and various collection of learning and knowledge, which was so arranged in his mind, as to be ever ready to be brought

¹ See p. 146.

forth. But his superiority over other learned men consisted chiefly in what may be called the art of thinking, the art of using his mind, a certain continual power of seizing the useful substance of all that he knew, and exhibiting it in a clear and forcible manner; so that knowledge, which we often see to be no better than lumber in men of dull understanding, was, in him, true, evident, and actual wisdom.

Though usually grave, and even awful, in his deportment, he possessed uncommon and peculiar powers of wit and humour; he frequently indulged himself in colloquial pleasantry; and the heartiest merriment was often enjoyed in his company; with this great advantage, that as it was entirely free from any poisonous tincture of vice or impiety, it was salutary to those who shared in it.

He had accustomed himself to such accuracy in his common conversation, that he at all times expressed his thoughts with great force, and an elegant choice of language, the effect of which was aided by his having a loud voice, and a slow deliberate utterance. In him were united a most logical head with a most fertile imagination, which gave him an extraordinary advantage in arguing: for he could reason close or wide, as he saw best for the moment. From a spirit of contradiction and a delight in showing his powers, he would often maintain the wrong side with equal warmth and ingenuity; so that, when there was an audience, his real opinions could seldom be gathered from his talk; though when he was in company with a single friend, he would discuss a subject with genuine fairness. In all his numerous works, he earnestly inculcated what appeared to him to be the truth; his piety being constant, and the ruling principle of all his conduct.

LOOKING BACK

Such was SAMUEL JOHNSON, a man whose talents, acquirements, and virtues, were so extraordinary, that the more his character is considered, the more he will be regarded by the present age, and by posterity, with admiration and reverence.

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